THE ART OF TEKKEN

A COMPLETE VISUAL HISTORY



DYNAMITE®

Image from *3DS Tekken Prime Edition*

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THE ART OF TEKKEN™

A COMPLETE VISUAL HISTORY

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Image from Tekken 6

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INTRODUCTION

FIGHTING GAMES RULED the mid '90s. For years, you would be hard pressed to find a video game magazine—in any country—without a fighting game on its cover. The release of *Street Fighter II: The World Warrior* had created a paradigm shift in a growing industry, and everyone wanted a piece.

Though fighting games had evolved from arcade beat-'em-ups and side scrollers like *Double Dragon* and *Streets of Rage*, *Street Fighter II* had debuted the "fighting game" as a brand new genre. More than that, it had bridged the gap between the waning arcade market and the burgeoning home console market, bolstering both.

Street Fighter II meant true multiplayer competition: one-on-one fights, unmoderated by a leaderboard. Your opponent stood right beside you. Your blood and adrenaline surged for minute-long fight to the K.O. Placing quarters down on a fighting game that meant more than "I'm next"; it meant, "I got winner."

A visit to the arcade to seek out new opponents, make new friends, and hone your skills suddenly felt vital in a way it hadn't in years. Meanwhile, that experience became transportable to your home. Most console games didn't translate well to the quick-play format of the arcade. And many arcade games, once ported to a console, were exposed for their design mostly meant to eat quarters. But fighting games felt different. Winning was winning. Losing was losing. And inviting a friend or sibling to pick up the second controller was a challenge almost worthy of the public arena of the arcade.

Street Fighter II was the first. It would be followed by a host of others: *Mortal Kombat*, *Virtua Fighter*, *Primal Rage*, *Killer Instinct*.

And *Tekken*.

By the mid '90s, polygonal 3-D graphics had come into vogue—especially in the arcade, where the cabinets were still more powerful than their in-home counterparts. And in the rat race of the competitive arcade scene, where physical space was at a premium, 3-D graphics stood out. But *Tekken*'s use of 3-D was about more than visual flair. Using the classic fighting-game format, *Tekken* became a showcase for how 3-D space could be used—how it looked, how it felt, how you *moved*.

Though it had come into the scene on *Street Fighter II* and *Virtua Fighter*'s shoulders, *Tekken* soon made a name for itself with intuitive controls, cutting edge graphics, and relentless iteration.

There were plenty of games that charged into the fighting genre's now crowded arena, only to be felled by a superior opponent and never heard from again. Each game had its own signature strengths: the distinctive characters of *Street Fighter*; the violent brutality of *Mortal Kombat*. The complexity and 3D wizardry of *Tekken*.

As of 2017, Tekken games had sold more than 44 million copies worldwide, making *Tekken* the best-selling fighting game series of all time. And it got there by way of a simple philosophy: *Keep making games.*

Like the proverbial boxer who is knocked down seven times but gets up eight, *Tekken* has always persevered—and done its best to capitalize on its popularity and to innovate for the next generation.

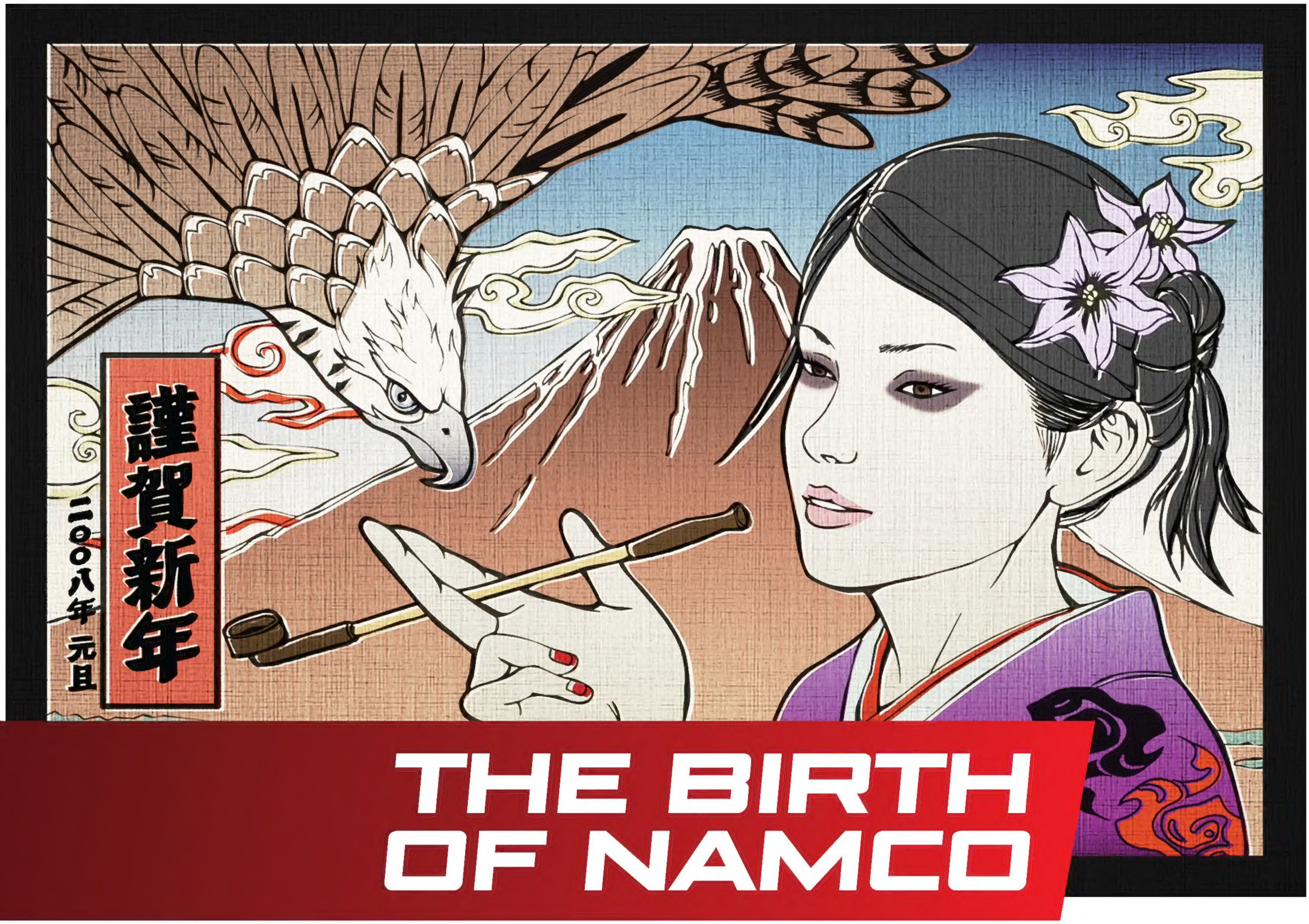
"Everyone talks about the boom of fighting games before, but not the current ones," says Katsuhiro Harada, the producer of the *Tekken* series. "We saw a lot of titles introduced, but a lot have disappeared. A lot of franchises that people might have fond memories of, and say, 'Hey, that was really awesome,' are no longer here.

"I feel strongly that it's very important for a franchise to continue to be relevant and continue to make installments and for the franchise to be updated. Not just for people who played at that certain time, but to bridge the gap between generations, and to keep the game available to newer players as well."

And so, some 25 years after fighting games hit the mainstream, one true champion is left standing: *Tekken*.

DEVIL JIN

GET READY FOR THE NEXT BATTLE



THE BIRTH OF NAMCO

IN 1955, Masaya Nakamura purchased two wooden horses and installed them on the rooftop of a department store in Yokohama. The horses were the first children's novelty for his new company, Nakamura Seisakusho.

Department stores were a part of Japan's Westernization in the aftermath of World War II, and rooftop amusement parks became a common feature. Parents would bring their kids for a fun city excursion, or drop them off to play while the adults shopped. Eventually, department store rooftops would come to host ferris wheels, crane games, plinko, and a variety of other games and rides. They were was the birthplace of Japan's *gemu sentaas* (game centers) — or, as we call them, arcades.

Nakamura's company grew along with the rooftop amusement craze, and he eventually changed the company name to Nakamura Manufacturing Company. In 1963, the company installed the Roadway Ride atop the Mitsukoshi department store in Tokyo. The Roadway Ride was a "racetrack" on rails, similar to old-timey car rides in modern day theme parks. It was enormously popular. Soon there would be a Roadway Ride on nearly every department-store roof in Japan.

The features that drew customers were always evolving. And when they evolved into video games, Nakamura was once again at the forefront. The company's first arcade game was called *Racer*. It was a straightforward title for a straightforward game, one of the earliest examples of the racing genre. Shortly after introducing *Racer*, the Nakamura Manufacturing Company began going by a simpler abbreviation: Namco.

In 1974, Namco cemented its place in the booming arcade business when it purchased the Japanese rights to Atari. The move was considered extremely risky at the time. Despite Atari's unquestionable success in the U.S. market, the $500,000 price tag was steep. But with 10 years of exclusive Japanese rights and Namco's established roots in the game centers, Nakamura was certain he would make his money back. He was right—and then some.

Acquiring distribution rights to some of the most popular games of the era gave Namco the resources to continue to innovate. Over the next decade, Namco would produce some of the most iconic arcade titles of all time, including *Pac-Man*, *Galaga*, *Xevious*, and *Dig Dug*. Even after the arcade market waned in the mid-'80s, and other game companies folded, Namco remained resilient. Its long history and diverse assets allowed it to survive times of financial uncertainty and continue to look ahead. In the late '80s, looking for a spark that would light the path into the next decade, Namco again decided it was time to innovate.

And so it began development of what would become the System 21, the first arcade board dedicated to 3-D.


THE KILL



THE ARMS RACE

THE BATTLE FOR ARCADE SUPREMACY WAS ABOUT MORE THAN THE GAMES

THE EMERGENCE OF home video game consoles changed the way we talk about games. How many bits? How much RAM? How many controller ports? Cartridge or disc? When the systems became products themselves, knowing them inside and how became just as important as the games they played.

In the arcades, the games were just the games, so the hardware went unnoticed. Name any prominent arcade developer – Atari, Nintendo, Sega, Namco – and a list of its most famous games is sure to follow. Those are the reasons each of them are a household name. But as game developers battled for relevance in an increasingly competitive arcade market, there was another battle raging beneath the surface: the battle for hardware supremacy.

The need for better hardware stemmed naturally from the need for games – not necessarily *better* games, but *different* games. If your game was in color instead of black-and-white, it stood out. If your motherboard could render more pixels, players noticed. In a long row of like-sized cabinets, even a slight innovation stood out. Standing out meant more quarters, which meant more profits and more space on the arcade floor for more games. Every inch of floor space mattered.

In 1985, as the arcade market recovered from a slight dip, Namco was looking to the horizon. They knew that in order to stay relevant at the arcade, they would need to plan not only for the games of 1986, but the games of 1990 and 2000. The knew that new frontier of hardware development was 3-D.

In 1988, after three years of development, Namco unveiled the System 21, known around the industry as the Polygonizer. The System 21 was made up for four printed circuit boards (PCBs), including a Graphics Processing Unit (GPU) solely dedicated to processing 3-D graphics. That GPU contained five Texas Instruments microchips that far exceeded the processing power of anything else on the market at the time. It was the first arcade system board made specifically to process 3-D polygons.

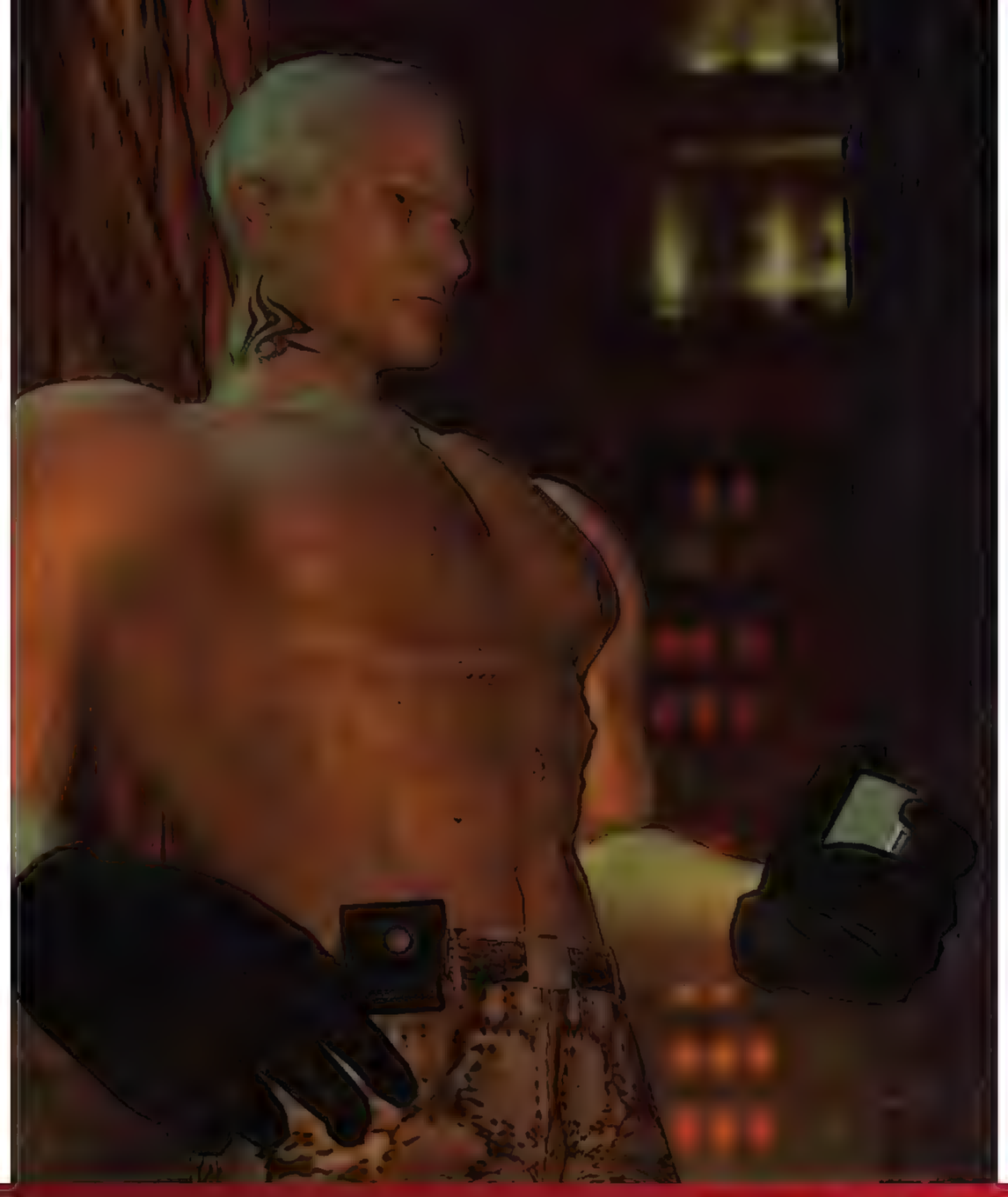
Namco showcased this new technology by going back to its arcade roots: racing games. *Winning Run* was a straight-forward racing game that put players behind the wheel of a Formula One car. The pod-like cabinet, steering wheel, pedals, silver and red racing chair, and *Miami Vice*-style title treatment, stood out on the arcade floor. And once players were behind wheel, the 3-D graphics sucked them in. *Winning Run* became one of the most popular games in Japanese arcades.

Despite taking three years to develop, System 21 put Namco laps ahead of the competition. No other arcade developers were prepared for 3-D. Not even Sega, who wouldn't begin to develop its own 3-D board until after it had seen the power of the Polygonizer.

With such a massive head start, Namco was able to carve out its very own corner of the market. They continued to improve the board, making performance enhancements in System 21B and 21C. It had a series of 3-D hits, like *Galaxian3*, a sequel to *Galaxian* and *Galaga*, and *Starblade*. And as if the power of their arcade board weren't enough, the follow-up to *Winning Run* was released in 1991 with a dual System 21 board.

For four years, Namco owned 3-D – all the way until 1992, when Sega finally released its competing board, the Model 1. Sega showed off the power of their new board with a racing game, as Namco had, and with it became the new industry leader in 3-D technology.







THE SONY GAMBLE

A NEW CONSOLE MEANT A NEW OPPORTUNITY FOR NAMCO

BEFORE THE LAUNCH of the PlayStation in late 1994, Sony had spent the better part of a decade trying to get into the home console market. The music and electronics giant had wagered early on that their compact disc technology had potential as a medium for games and had filed several patents with that application mind. In 1988, Sony even signed a deal with Nintendo for what was originally conceived as an add-on to the Super Famicom (or Super Nintendo Entertainment System in the West).

The add-on, called the "PlayStation," was set to be announced at the 1991 Consumer Electronics Show. But at the eleventh hour, notoriously hard-nosed Nintendo President Hiroshi Yamauchi reread the original contract and discovered it gave a disproportionate amount of control to Sony. As the industry leader in home consoles, Yamauchi was offended. Ken Kutaragi, the "Father of the PlayStation," learned that the Nintendo deal was off the table when Nintendo chairman Howard Lincoln took the CES stage and announced a partnership with Philips instead.

After regrouping, Kutaragi attempted to align the PlayStation with Sega. Sega CEO Tom Kilinski even took the proposal to his board of directors, but was rebuffed. In a 2013 interview with *US Gamer,* Kilinski recalled having been told by the board, "That's a stupid idea. Sony doesn't know how to make hardware. They don't know how to make software either. Why would we want to do this?"

It was only then that Sony decided to make a console of their own.

But what kind of console would it be? Aside from the compact-disc format, everything was up for debate. Would it be cool and edgy, like the upcoming Sega Saturn? Or robust and family-friendly like Nintendo's Super Famicom? What kind of games would it support?

Central to answering these questions was a simpler debate: Would the Playstation focus on 2-D or 3-D games? Sony knew their technology could play either, but choosing one went a long way to defining the PlayStation brand. Though 3-D games were gaining traction at the arcades, console games were overwhelmingly 2-D — and was the console space Sony was attempting to penetrate. On top of that, 2-D games were much cheaper to develop.

But then something happened — and, according to former Sony Computer Entertainment chairman Shigeo Maruyama, "the direction of the PlayStation became instantly clear."

That something was *Virtua Fighter*.

"If it wasn't for *Virtua Fighter*, the PlayStation probably would have had a completely different hardware concept," former Sony Computer Entertainment producer Ryoji Akagawa told *4Gamer* in 2012.





The fighting game's stunning polygonal graphics and enormous popularity at Japanese game centers showed Sony unequivocally that 3-D was the future of gaming — and their angle on the marketplace. A rival had inadvertently given Sony the key to giving PlayStation a fighting chance and avoiding saddling their new system with technology that would have been instantly rendered outdated by the Sega Saturn and Nintendo 64.

"With great timing, Sega saved our hides," Maruyama said.

With the number of dimensions was settled, it was time for the hard part: Securing games. This was no small feat for a newcomer, even one as big as Sony. The only two players in the console space — Sega and Nintendo — had been firmly established in arcades for over a decade and were dedicated to making their own first-party software. The Sega board was right: Not only had Sony never made video game hardware before, they had never made games before, either.

Sony turned instead to third party developers. They bought small studios like Psygnosis and signed an exclusive deal with Williams Entertainment. These acquisitions and partnerships allowed Sony to get the games it needed — and game studios to expand their reach. With Sega and Nintendo's emphasis on first-party titles, third-party games were often lost in the shuffle.

To most of the games industry, the PlayStation's 3-D processor and CD format presented a big risk. Would the format catch on? Would the PlayStation even be able to compete?

But to Namco, Sony represented the ideal partnership. At one point in time, sale of their games on the Nintendo Entertainment System accounted for 40% of Namco's revenue. But the two companies had begun to diverge, both philosophically and practically. While Namco developed its System 21 arcade board using 3-D technology to grab an edge in the arcades, Nintendo stuck to its cartridge format. And even at 64-bits, the cartridge format was simply not powerful enough to process the polygons of Namco's latest games. (Indeed, Nintendo's decision to stick with cartridges for the SNES and the Nintendo 64 would eventually cost it other third party developers, including role-playing-game titan Squaresoft.) In order to maximize its profits, Namco needed to be able to release its games in both the arcades and on home consoles, as they had once done with Nintendo.

Meanwhile, Namco had lost its footing as the industry leader in 3-D. With Sega's Model 1 and Model 2 arcade boards powering the likes of *Virtua Fighter*, *Daytona USA*, and *The House of the Dead* in the arcades, Namco was playing from behind.

So they changed tactics. Rather than beginning another years-long development cycle to outdo the Model 2, Namco based its next arcade board on the the PlayStation hardware, ensuring easy ports from cabinet to console. The Namco System 11 was not as powerful as Sega's Model 2, but it was cheaper. Namco could now distribute its games into smaller arcades that Sega's expensive cabinets had left behind.

Namco provided Sony a big, established name in software development, and Sony provided Namco a way back into the console market. They were going head-to-head with Sega in a way Sega didn't expect.

All they needed now was a *Virtua Fighter* of their own.





RAVE WAR

NAMCO CHOOSES ITS FIGHTER

IN THE DECEMBER 1994 issue of Electronic Gaming Monthly, one of the biggest console gaming magazines in North America, there was a small preview for a new fighting game coming from Japan in the next year. It was called *Rave War*.

"Namco is working hard on a brand-new entry in the realm of fighting games. *Rave War*'s (as out AMOA coverage stated) fighting style is like that of *Virtua Fighter 2*. However, I found *Rave War* quite a bit more fun to play. The game play mechanics, not to mention the sheer graphic and background intensity, are astounding! The characters have long and very interesting backgrounds.

"*Rave War* uses some of the same amazing technology used in their popular *Ridge Racer* series. When you first start playing the game, you immediately realize just how much work was put into the game play. Each character has a number of moves to choose from, and as they are executed, the screen rotates for the best view. Look for it in the first quarter of '95."

Rave War, of course, was *Tekken*. The game was already called *Tekken* in Japan – literally "Iron Fist" – a name they arrived at after the original project title, *Kamui*, ran into trademark issues.

When asked about that period in Namco's history, Producer Masahiro Kimoto said: "At the time, it was right before the dawn of polygon games, and 2D fighting games were enjoying a boom in popularity, as seen the genre's number one title Street Fighter II. It was obvious to practically everyone that in the near future 3D fighters would replace the currently popular 2D ones.

"Regarding polygon-based games, Namco had led the rest of the world with new challenges and results. Although behind, Sega had released Virtua Racing, and was seeking to create a new hit in the form of Virtua Fighter. Regarding fighting game development, Namco had completely lost the lead to Sega."

Kimoto went on to say: "A lot of different technologies and experience was necessary to develop 3D fighting games.

"In particular, the ability to create 3D character models and animating them required a high level of technical skill and knowledge. To create realistic animation data, and create the technology to fluidly animate the complex rigging models of the characters, and to develop the engine to handle the massive amount of animation data was quite a difficult task. It would be fair to say the only company at the time that could effectively do this was Sega.

"As the leading company of polygon-based game development at the time, Namco believed that this era of polygon-based games would continue for the next several decades. Namco also thought that regardless of the genre of game, the ability to create 3D humanoid character models with complex rigging and use a massive amount of animation data to animate them is technology that would definitely be necessary moving forward. It was then









that Namco gathered its veterans and promising young developers internally, and even recruited top talent from elsewhere to proceed with the development of Tekken."

FIGHTING THE FIGHT

Namco may have been operating at the cutting edge of entertainment technology, but it was still a corporation, and that meant a corporate culture. With nearly a quarter century of game development experience, Namco had developed a set process. There was a "way things were done."

But Tekken wasn't in a position to follow the established route. Namco was racing to complete *Tekken* in time for the PlayStation launch; to compete with *Virtua Fighter 2*; to re-establish the company's arcade dominance.

Tekken Project was the central focus at the Namco offices. Team members were pulled off of other project, or hired away from other studios. Green employees, including a young man from sales named Katsuhiro Harada, were thrown into the deep end and expected to swim – and swim fast. Those who succeeded would be part of *Tekken* Project for years to come. Those who did not were soon gone.

The *Tekken* development team essentially spend a full year in "crunch," industry lingo for a marathon of grueling hours to meet project deadlines. It's a testament to the team's skill that a process so fast and chaotic would result a game that would soon make *EGM* say, "When you first start playing, you immediately realize how much work was put into the game play."

That review would be an extraordinary understatement – and a sign of things to come.



THE IRON FIST TOURNAMENT

TEKKEN TAKES ON THE WORLD

IN THE EARLY '90S, North America was a kit-driven arcade market. Making and distributing new cabinets was an expensive enterprise, and with nearly two decades worth of cabinets already in existence, it was much easier to replace games that were un- or under-used and reskin their cabinets than to build a new cabinet for every new title.

Tekken was an exception.

Anticipation for a new fighting game from one of the gaming world's best-known brands was high, and so were Namco's expected earnings. They shelled out for an original cabinet design. The title treatment stood tall — high enough to stand out in most game centers — slanting straight up from the screen rather than curling forward to shield it. The title itself was bright red against black, and the sides and front of the cabinet were emblazoned with larger-than-life renderings of characters' faces. There was an extra-wide control board for two, and a 24-inch CRTVmonitor. The cabinet was striking from a distance, and gave spectators a clear view of the action from either side.

But *Tekken* didn't come kick-spinning out of the gate. It sold fine, but the tallest coin stacks were still lined along the edge of *Street Fighter II* and *Virtua Fighter 2*. Few arcades had two *Tekken* cabinets installed back-to-back, as was customary for other popular fighting games at the time. It was a far cry from the reception Namco had envisioned for its new prize product.

That is, until a mere four months later, when *Tekken* was released on the Sony PlayStation.

The PlayStation debuted in Japan on December 3, 1994 with eight launch titles. Though *Tekken* wasn't quite ready in time to join Namco's *Ridge Racer* among the starting line-up, it came close enough to represent the beginning of Namco's new strategy: develop games for near-simultaneous release in arcades and on consoles, and reap the benefits of both. The PlayStation received rave reviews from Japanese gaming press and managed to keep pace with the Sega Saturn, a rival CD-based console, despite the Sega's decision to "Price Is Right" Sony and launch the Saturn one month earlier.

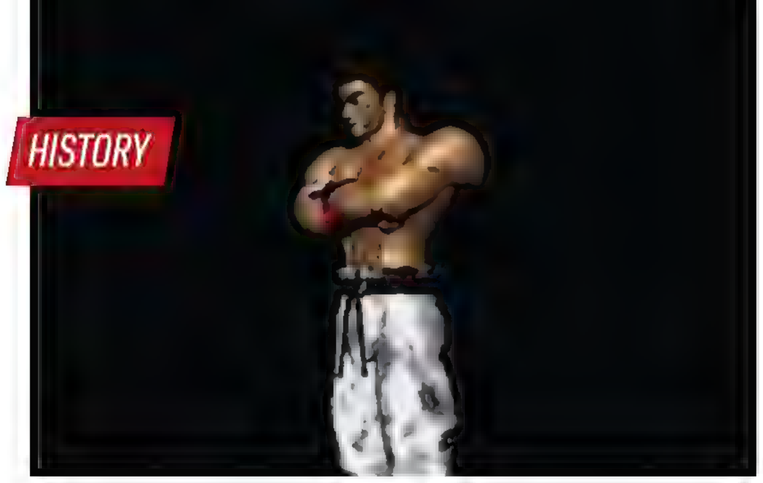
There were a variety of reasons for the PlayStation's early success. The perceived newness, the selection of games. Sega had also underestimated the continued popularity of its cartridge-based 16-bit console, the Sega Genesis, ended up cannibalizing sales of its successor, the Saturn. With the Nintendo-Sega rivalry firmly established, many consumers had already chosen a side, but Nintendo's most recent console, the Super Famicom, was over four years old; and gamers were hungry for something new.

A little under four months later, on March 31st, 1995, *Tekken* became available to a hungry new fan base. It was *the* fighting game of the PlayStation. And it was *good*.

鉄拳™ TEKKEN

The King of IRON FIST tournament battle, now KAZUYA bears a grudge against his father.















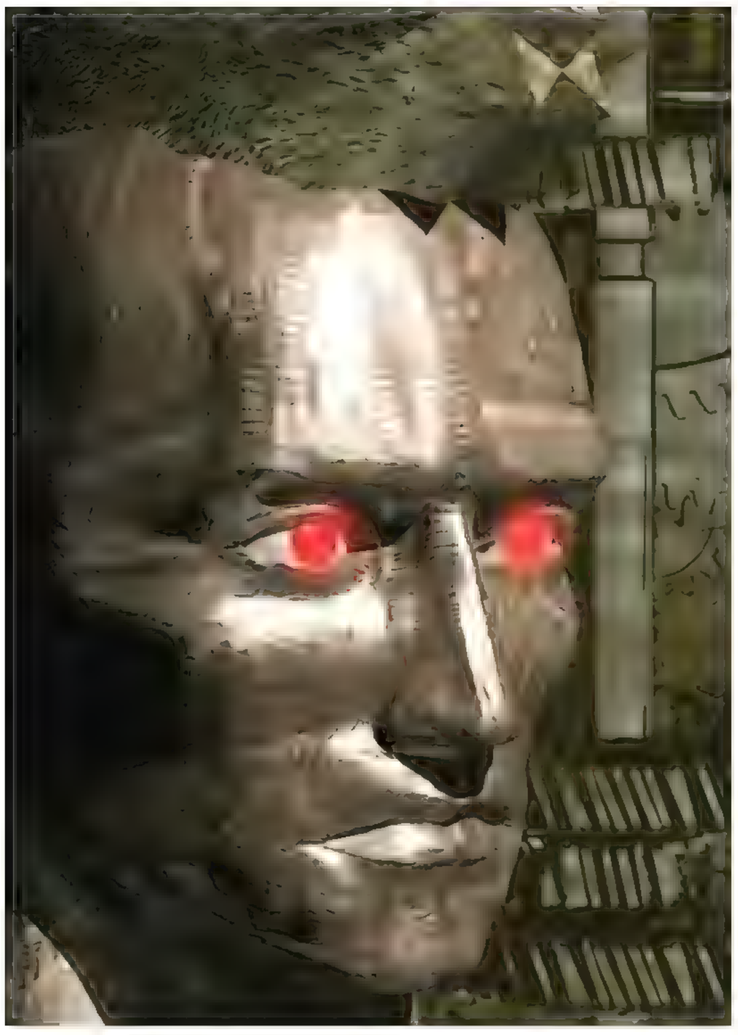


Tekken represented a number of innovations in the crowded fighting-game market. Unlockable characters encouraged players to play the game through with each character and find—and unlock—their favorite. And the stunning variety of fighters meant there was a character for everyone. Fully rendered endings for every character felt like real rewards for completing the game. Closed arenas did away with "ring outs," (achieving victory by knocking an opposing character out of the field of play), a *Virtua Fighter* tactic players had decried as "cheap."

Unlike most fighting games, where buttons corresponded to actions like "punch" or "kick," the four buttons of *Tekken* each controlled a different limb—right arm, left arm, right leg, left leg. The control scheme was intuitive: easy to understand, but difficult to master. And it was perfect for the PlayStation controller, with the quadrant of buttons mapped on its right side.

And then, of course, there were the 3-D graphics.

Tekken was awarded 38 out of a possible 40 points in *Famitsu Weekly*, Japan's preeminent






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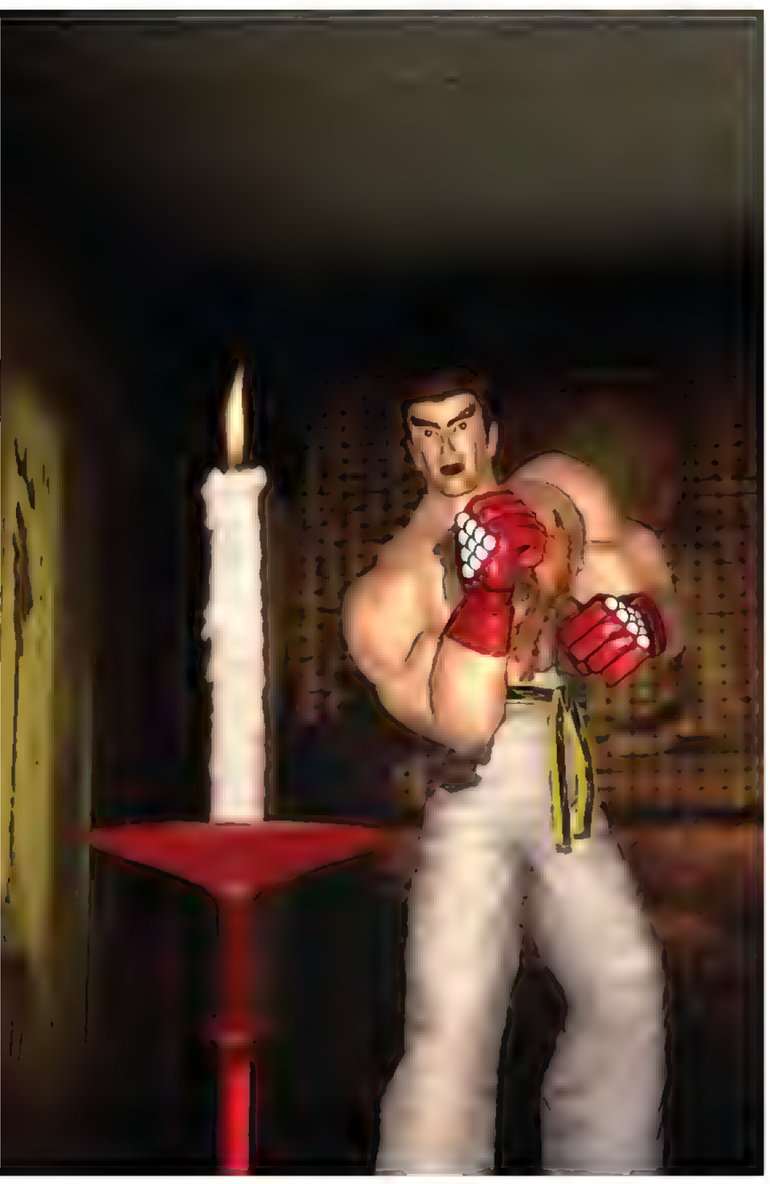


game magazine. The game's popularity on the home console immediately fed back into its prominence at the arcade. Fans honed their skills at home, then took their best characters out into the wild to face friends and fellow fans. Plus, the arcade offered bonuses you couldn't get at home. Despite the increased memory size of the CD format, certain animations had to be cut to get everything to fit. Character selection on the arcade version, for example, would cue a facial animation from that character, a feature that had been cut from the PlayStation release to minimize loading time.

In the end, the arcade-version data was compressed to about 70% for the console release. Still, the port was near-perfect in all the ways that mattered. Namco's strategy was working brilliantly.

Despite missing the PlayStation's launch by four months, *Tekken* had become a smash hit. And back at Namco, the Tekken team was hard at work on a sequel.











ROUND 2

DEVELOPMENT CONTINUES AS TEKKEN PROJECT CAPITALIZES ON EARLY SUCCESS

THE MAKING OF the first two *Tekken* games was essentially one continuous development with a partial release halfway through. The process was chaotic and inefficient. With so many people designing characters and trying out art styles and programming systems – only for them to be thrown out or overwritten by another team member – the dev team barely knew what *Tekken* was until it was released.

Tekken 2 was an opportunity to finish what they'd started.

First, they'd work on the graphics. Despite being a "next-gen" 3-D game on brand new hardware, *Tekken's* visuals were the most common source of criticism from reviewers. *Virtua Fighter 2*'s characters may have been blocky and unrealistic, but they at least all felt like they belonged in the same game. So many different people created characters and assets for *Tekken* that the game lacked a unified style.

Now, with the core roster established, the designs could be refined, and new characters and levels created with a particular look in mind.

The team also had another year of experience with the Sony development tools under their belts. The hardware was familiar. Masanori Yamada had more time to work his compression magic. They had everything they needed to remain at the forefront of polygonal rendering.

Next – and of utmost importance – came the question of game balance.

"It was only around the middle of development on *Tekken 2* that we starting using numerical conversion and calculation," Harada told *Edge Magazine* in 2015. Before that, "we just used our senses; there was no theory at the time. In that sense, *Tekken 1* isn't really a fighting game. It should be called a human body action game. They have abilities, and they hit each other, but it's not really a martial arts game."

Namco did away with infinite combos like Jack's Cossack Dance, and refined other unbeatable moves that savvy players had learned to exploit. But those fixes were superficial. To give *Tekken* the depth of a top-tier fighting game, the team needed to go back to basics.

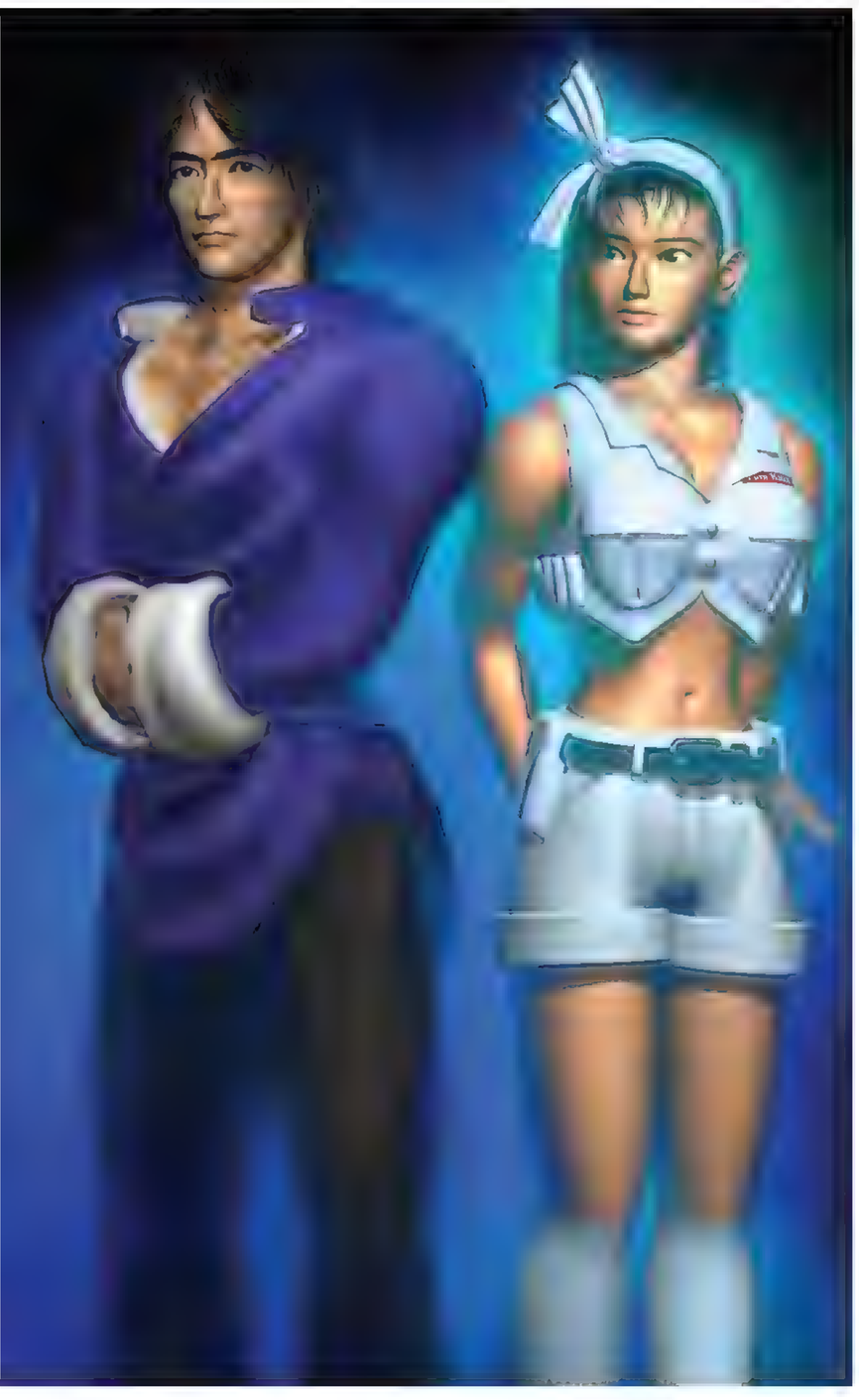
Doing so meant thinking hard about *Tekken's* characters. Why was each fighter there? Where did they come from? What had lead them to becoming a world-class fighter? Answering these questions meant further defining each character's fighting technique, which pointed the Tekken Project team back to the real world.

They redoubled their efforts on translating real world martial arts into *Tekken*. As moves and stances were grafted onto the characters. In turn, the characters took on new life. Their depth of their abilities made them feel deeper as people – as if they had earned the right to be there on the world stage, fighting for the title of champion.

Motion capture was just a developing as a viable technology. Everything had to be


鉄拳
TEKKEN 2™







recorded with cables attached to the stunt performers, so the tech wasn't yet suited for intense action. The results could only be used as reference for the animators, who had to adjust it frame by frame—but the promotional department still leveraged the appeal of motion-capture technology for marketing.

When players realized they could pull off moves that triple black belts used during while sparring at their local dojo, they were hooked.

The manual nature of the movement refinements didn't just mean that kicks looked better and that characters were more distinct. Collision detection was better. Lateral movement was better. The team was inching ever closer to re-creating motion in 3-D.

They also realized that they were building a saga. The story of the first game served merely to put characters and the tournament itself in context. Endings were nothing but satisfying rewards for a completed arcade-mode run. But now each of those fun little beats needed to be fleshed out.

Turning the first game's protagonist into a villain was a bold decision. Most players may not have come to fighting games for the story, but that twist established the *Tekken* series penchant for taking narrative risks at a time when gameplay and storytelling were becoming tightly interwoven. Being able to play as the first game's villain and unlocking relatives and associates of familiar characters made *Tekken*'s world feel dynamic and lived in. It created anticipation for what would come next—not just the fight combos, but as a soap opera.

The first version of *Tekken 2* was released in Japanese arcades in early August, 1995, a mere four months after *Tekken 1* was made available







on PlayStation in Japan. In North America, *Tekken 2* arrived in arcades in late April, 1996, four months after the original's North American PlayStation release as well. In arcades, *Tekken 2* replaced its predecessor before waning popularity and profitability even became a consideration. Namco was riding a wave, and fans were riding it with them.

The *Tekken 2* cabinet featured an innovation that made it even more compelling: Characters were unlocked using an internal time-based system.The longer a cabinet ran, the more characters would become available, and the more popular the machine would become, giving arcades extra incentive to get *Tekken 2* out early and keep it running often. (There were codes that could manually unlock characters, but players were left to figure them out on their own. It was real-world mythmaking that only added to the game's allure.)

Tekken 2 became one of the best-reviewed and best-selling fighting games of all time. It received a 38 out of 40 in *Famitsu Weekly*, equaling the original *Tekken*'s score. The PlayStation version, meanwhile, sold over 1.2 million units early after its release in Japan, and just shy of a million in its first four months in North America. *Tekken 2* became the first PlayStation title to sell over a million copies, and would go on to sell 5.7 million on consoles worldwide.

Tekken, it had become clear, was here to stay. And that realization lead to another paradigm shift inside Namco.

"That's when the team finally sat down and said, 'Hey, this is something that might continue for some time,'" Harada says. The rushed development style of of *Tekken 1* and *2* wouldn't work long term.

It was time to rebuild Tekken from the ground up.









BORN IN A DYING LAND

ARCADES ARE DISAPPEARING, BUT THEY'RE STILL ESSENTIAL FOR TEKKEN

IN THE DECADE between 1981 and 1991, the arcade industry in the United States plunged from an $8 billion industry to a $2 billion industry. That decline was representative of the world-wide trend. With Nintendo and Sega battling it out, the home console era had officially taken hold and what remained of arcades had more or less become an arms race between the companies that remained. Sega, Midway, and Namco each fought for elbow room at an ever-shrinking table. By 1994 — when Tekken was poised for its debut — with Sony's new PlayStation on the horizon, things looked even more grim for arcades. Yet that was the state of things when *Tekken* was set to make its debut to the world.

The one exception was fighting games.

Street Fighter II had changed the arcade industry. There was an energy and a vitality to playing against an opponent standing right beside you. Increasingly, arcade floor space was taken up by *Street Fighters* and *Mortal Kombats* and *Virtua Fighters* while the popular games of yore sat idle or were replaced. Despite the dire straits of the arcade industry as a whole, what little floor space remained was earmarked for the next hot fighting game.

Despite the success of *Tekken*'s console sales, it would continue to be developed for arcade first. This was by design.

"A few of the bigger companies, Sega, Namco, Taito, had their own arcades," says Michael Murray, a longtime Tekken Project designer/producer, and one of the team's only American-born developers. "So that's why even when arcades were in decline, we were still motivated to provide games for our own arcades."

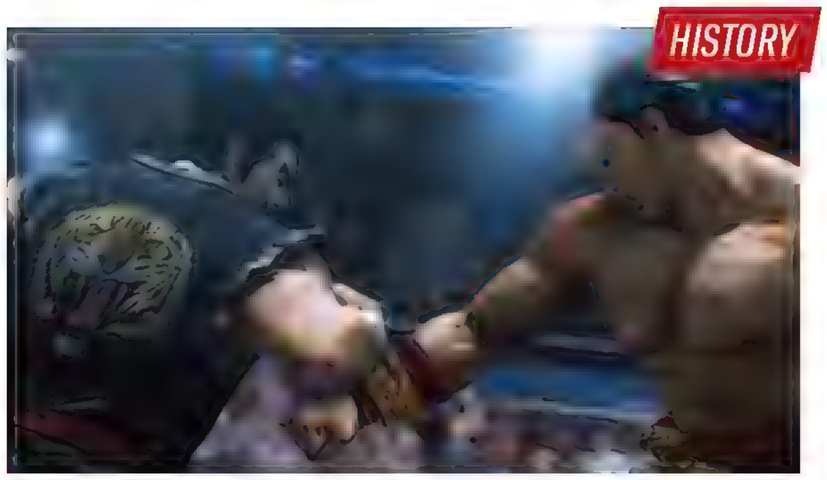
The arcade-first model also had a bit to do with the PlayStation release schedule, and Namco's desire to generate buzz around their new flagship title. But it had even more to do with the permanence of console releases at the time. There was no downloadable content (DLC), no patches, no *internet* — at least not in the way we think about it today. Once a game was pressed into a disc, packaged, and sold, that was it — glitches, balance issues, and all. Arcade cabinets were by no means easy to update, but it was at least possible.

"We used to have to take the flash ROM, DVDs, or HDDs (it was different depending on the installment) to the actual arcades and swap them out," Murray recalls. But even that was easier than stomaching a mistake in a mass-produced game disc.

So arcade gamers, who tended to be the fighting-game faithful, became beta testers of sorts. The *Tekken* developers could discover glitches and gather data on in-game balance, while continuing to improve the game before its console release.

"As Harada often says, it's a good way to both polish the game and recoup some of the development fees," Murray says. "And that pattern just stayed viable for *Tekken* a lot longer than other fighting game franchises."

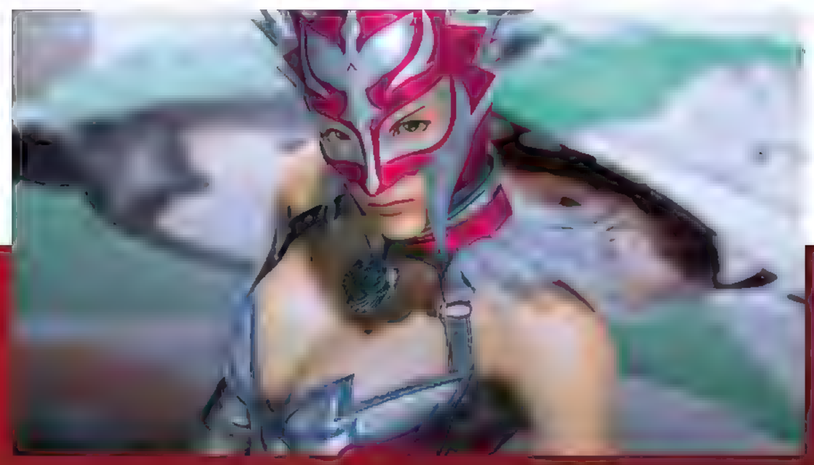












DESPITE THE SUCCESS OF TEKKEN'S CONSOLE SALES, IT WOULD CONTINUE TO BE DEVELOPED FOR ARCADE FIRST. THIS WAS BY DESIGN.



And to this day, every *Tekken* title in the core series has been released as an arcade title first.

In a 2017 interview, Harada told Gamasutra why *Tekken* has continued this pattern. "We don't just wait to see videos of people playing our game to see what they think, we can actually go and watch them play the game when we want to. You can see how their body reacts, their facial expressions. Not just for *Tekken 7*, I always go and watch people play my games.

"*Tekken 7* is the same case, and there are even more tournaments around the world this time, so I have even more chances to see this directly. If there were a lot of issues with the game, the game's popularity in arcades wouldn't be so high, this applies to the game's popularity on consoles also, so it's safe to say it is doing well.

"However, there are a few bugs that we have never seen before until we see the game being played by the public. Sometimes, an unintended element of the game goes unnoticed, and players might even get upset if we change it after the fact. But these aspects of game development aren't unique to only me, it's something that probably everyone in this industry experiences."

But things are changing. For example, releasing in arcades first and continuing development for consoles means the North American and European markets, essential for a worldwide brand like Bandai Namco, have to wait even longer for the game – sometimes years. And wait little remains of the once indispensable arcade industry is in worse shape than ever.

"Even in Japan, there's a transition," Murray says. "You go into the arcade and see there's a lot more card-based games, a lot more of the print club stuff that brings a lot of girls to the arcade, maybe not the stuff you imagine hardcore gamers would play.

"The arcades as we knew them aren't there anymore."

Even the process of upgrading the games has reversed itself in the era of downloadable content. Now upgrading and updating console games is not only easy, it's expected. This, in turn extends the lifespan of console games, and the length of development cycles.

"It's still an arcade game, though. So we have our DLC on console; and then that DLC actually makes its way back into the arcade version as well. So it's kind of a unique situation," Murray says.

Will these changes to the market finally mean the end of *Tekken* as an arcade-first title? Maybe. But no matter how *Tekken* changes in the coming years, the arcade will have always been an essential part of its DNA.


TEKKEN 7
TEKKEN


HISTORY








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AT HOME IN NIHON

FROM WORLD WAR II TO TEKKEN





IN THE ERA that gave rise to *Tekken*, most fighting games came from Japan – and, with few exceptions, Japan remains the epicenter of the genre today. Yet even among fighting games, Tekken is uniquely Japanese.

Tekken is not only from Japan, but *about* Japan. In stark contrast to *Street Fighter*, which is an international fighting game by design, filled with boiled down cultural stereotypes brandishing their nations' flags and battling on stages set in each fighter's country of origin, *Tekken* is a game set in Japan, about a Japanese family and Japanese culture.

In *Tekken*, Nihon is never far from the topic at hand.

After World War II, Japan was a nation at a crossroads. Perhaps only Germany would undergo more change in the decades to come. Within that change, two major challenges awaited: Reshaping Japan's image in the eyes of the world, and restructuring its economy away from war-focused enterprises. Both would come to influence not only what *Tekken* was about, but how it came to be.

ZAIBATSU

The prize for winning the first King of Iron Fist Tournament was not only renown as the greatest fighter in the world, but control over the Mishima Zaibatsu, a weapons conglomerate founded by the Mishima family and run by its patriarch, Heihachi Mishima.

The Mishima Zaibatsu was not merely a way to sweeten the fictional victory pot. It is a



Exclusive artwork for an Iberian Peninsula magazine cover

reflection of Japanese history. Zaibatsu were family-owned companies that grew into power as Japan industrialized. At the start of World War II, four Zaibatsu alone controlled half of all manufacturing in the Japanese Empire. These private companies had considerable influence over Japanese economics, and therefore, politics. At the risk of oversimplifying: the Zaibatsu had an increasing interest in expanding their industries, and war created a widespread, unified need for that growth. Selling weapons – and a war in which to use them – became profitable.

The Zaibatsu were dynastic and almost beyond reproach, towering industrial and cultural edifices that held the power to shape Japan's future.

In the aftermath of the second World War, most zaibatsu were dissolved. Under Allied occupation, the centralized private influence of the zaibatsu was seen as inherently undemocratic. Assets were seized, holding companies dissolved, and industries nationalized.

Still, the shadow of the zaibatsu loomed large over Japanese economics and culture.

The idea that a powerful family could build itself up into not only an imposing economic force, but one that controlled every level of production and even possessed the means of influencing policy, can be traced back to feudal Japan. Despite its grim real-world outcome, that image remainsinspiring. And it all begins with two things just about everybody has: family, and the will to succeed.

Heihachi Mishima had both; and he was nothing if not driven:an imposing figure, both literally and figuratively; a man so unflinchingly cruel that he threw his own son off a cliff to prove a point. His Mishima Zaibatsu is one of the most powerful corporations in *Tekken's* world. He even has the look of a villain – hulking shoulder muscles, devil-horn spikes of hair, and an ever-present sneer. That's no coincidence: Heihachi is a Japanese depiction of a Japanese interpretation of how World War II-era Japan was seen by the rest of the world.

"Heihachi is everyone's image of Japan during World War II," says Harada. "That was a concept that was forged early on inside the team."

This concept becomes even more interesting when it's extended to Heihachi's son, Kazuya Mishima. Kazuya, who started in the original *Tekken* as a protagonist looking for revenge against his evil father, became the villain of *Tekken 2* and the series beyond. Kazuya embodies Japan's boomer generation, struggling to escape the evils of the generation that came before – but who fears that those evils may be hereditary, inescapable and innate. (For Kazuya, who is inflicted by the Devil Gene, this is quite literally true.)

ON NOTICE

As soldiers returned from war, Japan experienced a baby boom – a sharp uptick in population and new families. Those children then grew up and had children of their own. In the 1970s – around the time Katsuhiro Harada was born – there were more children in Japan than there had been at any other time in the nation's history.

"There was a lot of competition to get into schools," Harada recalls. "Because we all had to take the same tests to get in."

But for Harada, there was always a degree of separation between the competition and the result. As much as he and all of the other students were pitted against one another for limited spots in the best schools, they weren't really rivals–they were in competition against themselves. Training meant intense studying and success meant passing tests. "Winning" could mean that you'd indirectly taken a spot from another prospective student, but you'd never know who. You'd never see the look on her face.

Like most Japanese parents, Harada's emphasized the importance his studies. And to ensure their son's focus, they forbade him from playing video games. Without a console to play at home, Harada did what any focused student would: he snuck out to the arcade.

But even the golden age of arcade games did not provide a respite from the rigors of academic competition – on the contrary, they became an extension of it. In that era, games rarely provided any head-to-head combat. Instead, players competed in parallel; a battle between player and the game, in hopes of reaching the leaderboard, where your initials would be proof that you'd beaten those who had come before you. Only so many spots in the best schools; only so many slots on the leaderboard.

In Japan, there is a social construct of respecting one's superiors. The superior, or elder, is known as *senpai*. Senpai literally means, "earlier colleague": someone older and more experienced. A senpai holds dominion over his kohai (literally "later colleague"), who looks up to and defers to his senpai as a student would to a tutor or an athlete to a team captain.

Or, say, a son to a father.

This kind of top-down social relationship is prevalent throughout Japanese culture, particularly in schools. But the expectation of absolute deference to one's elders fell in direct conflict with Japan's struggle to rebuild





Exclusive artwork for a magazine cover



itself after the war. Questioning the past was becoming necessary.

The struggle of the Mishima clan and the story of *Tekken* itself is about the struggle to invert the power structures of tradition. The characters – like Kazuya – either end up feeding back into them, or – like Jin, perhaps – find a way to break from them.

SET SAIL

Unable to spend all of his time at the arcade, and less interested in academic pursuits, Harada committed himself to athletics, sailing in particular.

"But it wasn't a loose group of people hanging out, enjoying the game," Harada explains. "The competition was very fierce." The same pressure he and the other kids felt to succeed at their studies boiled over into sport. Practice wasn't camaraderie – it was cutthroat. That part, at least, Harada enjoyed.

Yet there was something that still nagged at him. Out on the water, even in a race, the competition wasn't about the other boats. It was a race between him and the water: yet another competition against himself. Another leaderboard. All of it side-stepped what Harada really wanted – which was to win and crow. To embarrass a rival and relish his own victory.

Years later, in 2017, Harada reflected on this feeling as exhibition matches of *Tekken 7* displayed across arena-sized screens for the World Championships in San Francisco, California. After breaking an opponent's throw, a Jack-7 player stepped back and taunted his opponent before delivering the killing blow.

The crowd loved it.

Harada did, too.

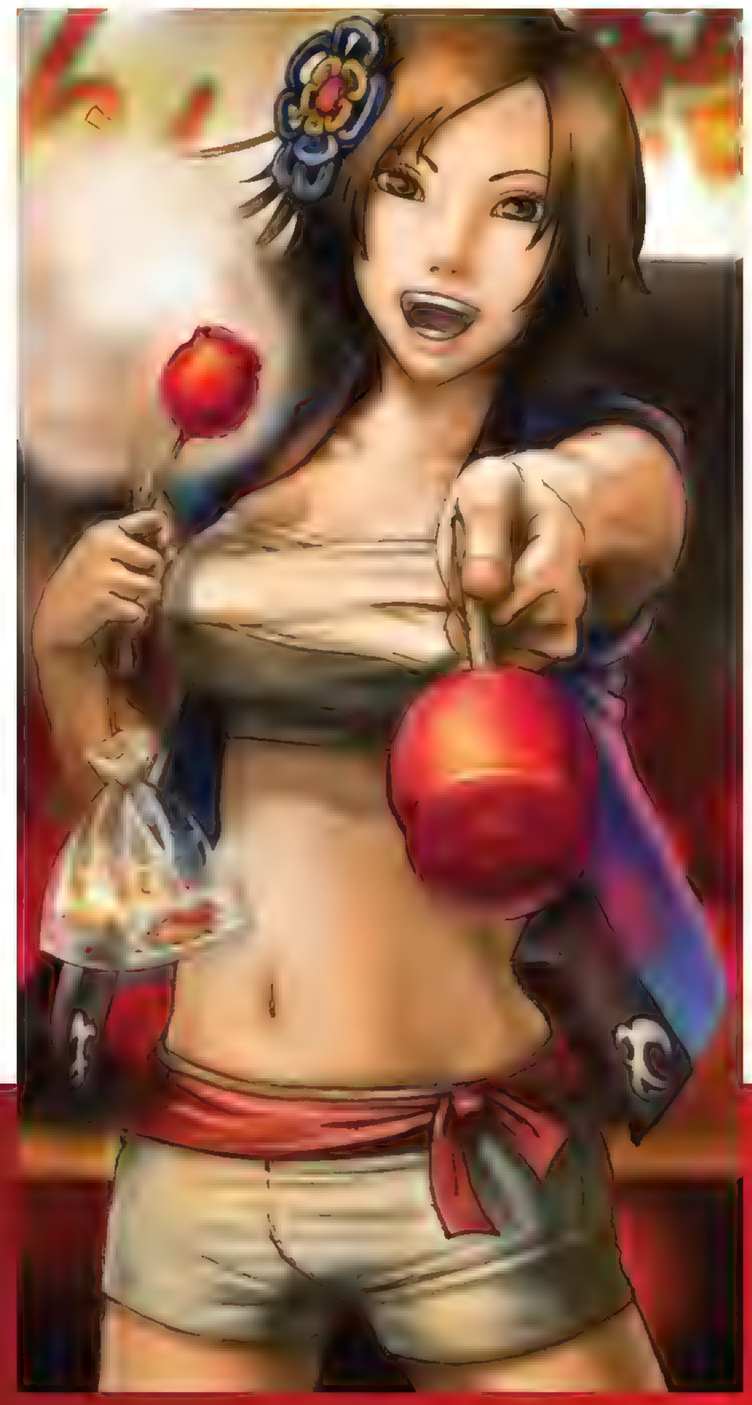
"Things like that, the taunts – things that might seem like they're meant to make your opponent angry, I chose to implement that way on purpose," he says. "Because it's not supposed to be, 'Hey, let's get along and play and have fun together.'"

As a kid in Japan in the late '70s and early '80s, if you didn't get into a particular school, you weren't in attendance. If you didn't achieve a high score, your initials would not be displayed in the *Galaga* cabinet. Losing was reduced to absence.

Harada wanted to bring the sting of losing to the fore.

Harada wanted to bring back a feeling suppressed since the end of World War II.

Harada wanted to win.



PRACTICE WASN'T CAMARADERIE — IT WAS CUTTHROAT.

CONTINUE?

TEKKEN REBOOTS FOR THE LONG HAUL





BY EARLY 1996, Sony's PlayStation had becoming the undisputed leader of the console generation. It had hit the sweet spot. It had nearly a year and a half to build its market share before Nintendo could introduce its next console, which was being developed under the codename "Ultra 64." It had handily defeated its most direct competitor – and the only other CD-based console on the market – the Sega Saturn. The PlayStation's impressive lineup of third party games attracted more buyers, which in turn attracted more third party developers. Once Nintendo's next console was released, Sega was the odd man out.

Namco's gamble had paid off. Company revenues doubled for three consecutive years – eclipsing even the Pac-Man boom years – and unit sales volume grew eightfold over four years. In just two games, *Tekken* had become such a success that Namco began development of another fighting game, the weapons-based *Soul Edge*, the first game in the *Soulcalibur* series.

Soon, Tekken Project would have two new leaders in Masahiro Kimoto and Katsuhiro Harada.

"The 'big accident' happened while developing *Tekken 3*," Harada-san says of the beginnings of his long career. "At that time, Japanese game companies scrambled for developers in the industry, and many from *Tekken* Project left Namco. It was intense. Numerous people left the company, and the office was very quiet. Then, I created the strangely named position, Game Director, and took that position for myself. I became the first to be noted in the credits as Game Director in the industry."

For Harada, who had begun his career at Namco in sales, this was bold, but not uncharacteristic. In Harada's first year at the company, he had broken the all-time arcade cabinet sales record four months in a row. The feat had earned him the respect of Nakamura-san himself. Harada leveraged this by inserting himself into the Tekken team. Though he lacked an impressive resume or programming expertise, he made up for those gaps with shrewdness and big ideas.

"While creators and programmers had lead development of games then, I did gather static data of users' feedback and analyze them, and gave reasons and concepts to every spec. This method was totally new at 90's and by doing this, I succeeded in convincing programmers, artists, sound designers, and planners.

"Since the reasons were clear and I was confident in my leadership, I had improved projects. And, this method contributed to changes in how to develop games then," Harada says.


TEKKEN 3
THE KING OF IRON FIST TOURNAMENT 3



***Tekken 3* characters initial design**

He also relished the exhausting nature of high-stakes development.

"It was so much fun to work in 1990s because it was a period full of discovery. Nobody wanted to go back home," jokes Harada-san. "At that time, there was superior 'future' equipment in the office. I lived under the desk. This was our everyday life."

He and Kimoto took charge.

The internal changes at Namco would be reflected in the development of *Tekken 3*.

"Until then we were kind of chasing after *Street Fighter*, because they were the biggest fighting game at the time. But then we realized that that's probably not the best case for a 3-D fighting game. So rather than building upon 1 and 2, we decided to start over at 3."

Tekken not only stopped chasing *Street Fighter*, it broke from *Virtua Fighter* as well. It was a true paradigm shift.

"[It] was to destroy everything you've done and start again."

The team's first decision was to leave the franchise behind, both figuratively and literally. The game's plot leapt 19 years into the future. This allowed them to soft-reboot the story with new characters — offspring and apprentices, as well as brand-new fighters — while keeping those that *Tekken* fans had grown to love. To perfect the 3-D movement of their fighters, they threw out the old code.

"I started to do a lot of rewriting of the scripting that controls the animation of the characters and the moves," Harada says. "So a lot of elements of the game were actually renewed or recreated from close to scratch."

Any broken relic was discarded. Anything imperfect was remade from the first line of code. Anything that worked before would make it through to the final product on its own merits.

How did Harada convince the money people to be so adventurous with a series that had become so financially important for the company? He left them no choice.

"I continuously said, 'Please do what I say. I will make it possible to catch up and overtake other fighting games,'" Harada recalls for a post on the official PlayStation blog in 2017.

He was a salesman, after all.

And to hear Harada tell it, there wasn't much interference from the suits anyway. It wasn't just that he had clout with Mr. Nakamura, though that was still true; it was more that they recognized that *Tekken* was still something new, and that they needed to trust in their team to develop their own process.

"We actually had most of the control of the project. The company didn't really oversee it that much. It was actually kind of a venture project. So we've always pretty much had control over it," Harada says.

To fill in the gaps left by departing team members, Namco recruited straight from universities — and not necessarily from game-related disciplines.

Artist Yoshinari Mizushima, for example, impressed Namco with his knack for designing characters that looked modern, yet iconic. He would help develop the visual consistency Harada had yearned for in the previous games. Characters like Jin Kazama and Ling Xiaoyu were the kind of simple yet instantly recognizable designs that would carry *Tekken* for decades. Old designs, like those of Yoshimitsu, Heihachi, and Nina, were updated. Everyone looked like they came from the same weird version of our world.

In the age of the PlayStation, the importance of *Tekken*'s character designs could not be overstated. Without a robust first-party lineup of its own, Sony was without a mascot like Mario or Sonic. And this was part of its appeal. It was more "grown up." Still, mascots were important as shorthand for the kind of brand recognition that helped sell games and consoles.





So like the PlayStation brand – whose brand was built on the collective strength of its game library – its mascot gallery became a hodgepodge of standout characters from standout games.

Heihachi and Kazuya, with their trademark pointy hair and perpetual scowls, were strong candidates, but it was Jin – flames on his pants, studs on red gloves, and slightly less ridiculous hair – who would become an unofficial Sony mascot for years to come.

Despite being new at his job, Harada didn't make things easy for Mizushima.

"Not all employees had any skills of 3-D CG, they usually learned after getting in the company. Mr. Mizushima had the most advanced skills, but I would always throw cold water on his design," Harada says. "As a result, he showed his sense at team building. He was really good at organizing a CG development team."

In other words, rather than becoming discouraged by Harada's criticisms, Mizushima developed other skills. He was not only able to design, but to get what he wanted out of his art team.

The game took advantage of Mizushima's character designs by highlighting them an opening movie that sent adrenaline coursing through players' veins. The "Embu" video was more or less a tech demo in disguise. It begins with Hwoarang, one of the game's new characters, showing off some of his taekwondo prowess. Other fighters are intercut, executing some of their best moves. For players, it's an exciting preview: fighters they might choose and moves they'll attempt to execute.

A different process yielded different results. *Tekken 3* could not, Harada learned the hard way, have it all. But that didn't mean it wasn't worth trying.

Next came the conversion from arcade to console. The process that had served the team so well during the first two games was slower and more painful this time. *Tekken 3* was the first game developed on the Namco System 12 arcade board, the successor to the System 11. But while the arcade hardware had grown more powerful, the PlayStation hardware had remained more or less the same. It meant that in addition to balance tweaks and gameplay polishes, porting *Tekken 3* to console meant losing more of the original game than *Tekken* and *Tekken 2* had suffered. Animations were more heavily compressed. Polygons were lost. Beautiful fully-rendered 3-D backgrounds were remade as 2-D panoramas.

"When I transferred the data from arcade to home version, I was mentally exhausted," Harada recalls for the PlayStation blog. "If the arcade was 100%, we had to compress animation data it to 8-15%. I was getting really nervous, thinking 'We can't sell it by just only this quality, what should we do?'"

The process took almost a year. But Harada's nerves over the conversion proved unwarranted. Players were willing to accept a dip in visual quality in order to have the arcade experience readily accessible in their living rooms.

On March 27, 1998, Harada woke up and went to work like any other day. Then he arrived at Namco Corporate Headquarters and learned that *Tekken 3* had sold over 1 million copies – in its first day. *Tekken 3* was a bonafide phenomenon.

The game would go on to sell 8.3 million copies worldwide, second only to *Super Smash Bros. Brawl* among fighting games to date. Some still point to it as the pinnacle of the series, and of the genre.

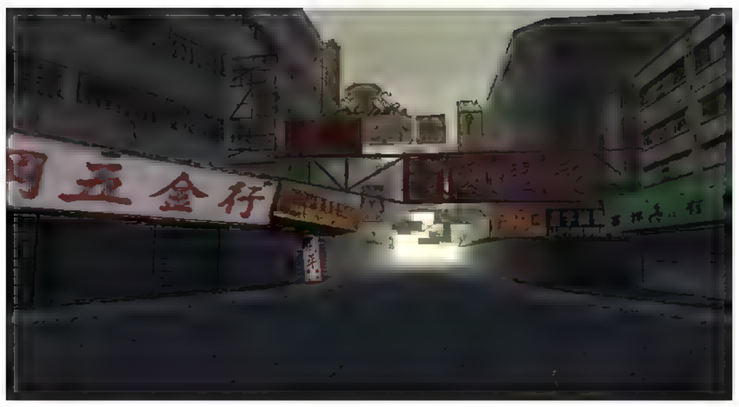
"Everything was full of discovery in the game industry and the fighting game industry," Harada says. "It was the passionate age. I could see only hopes and dreams in those days."

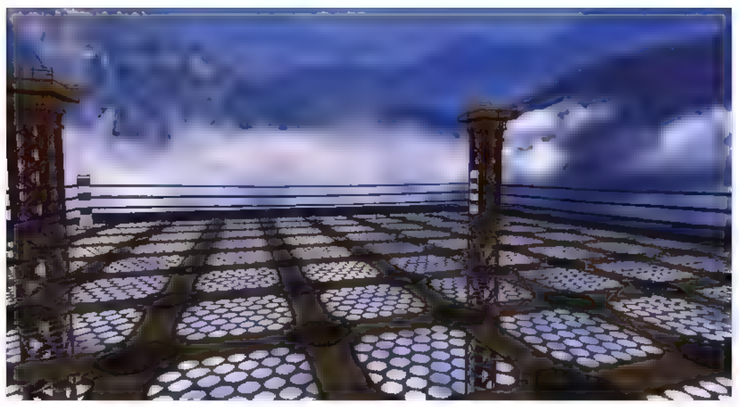
Little did he know he would spend the next 20 years living those dreams out.

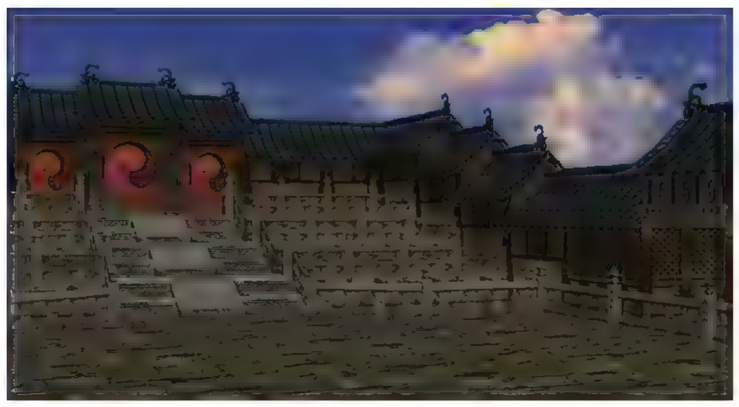




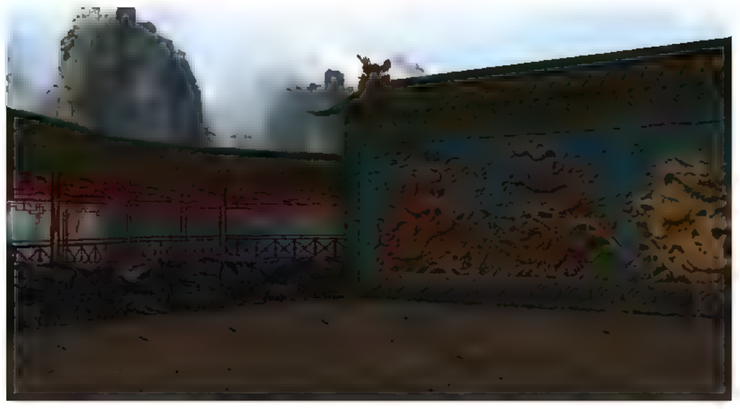

HISTORY





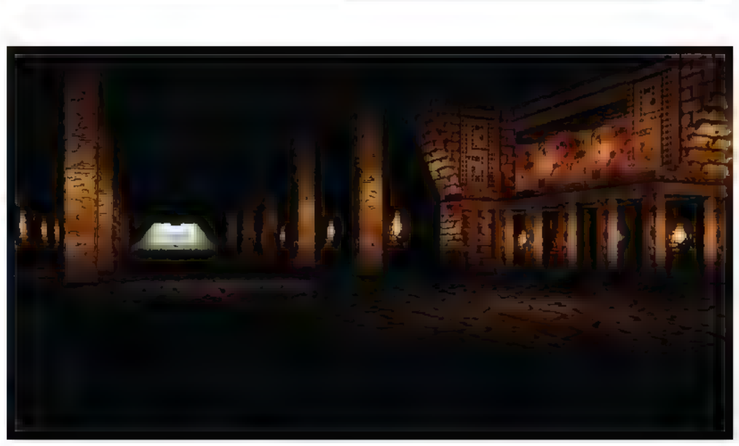


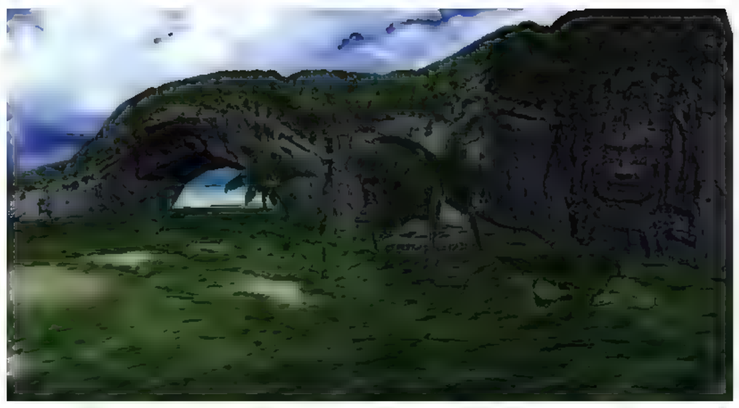












TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT

A NEW APPROACH FOR A NEW CONSOLE



TEKKEN 3 was done. Harada and the core team members took a well-deserved trip to Hawaii. The group vacation was paid for by the team members themselves. It was "cheap, but a very good experience" according to Harada.

By the time they returned home, *Tekken 3* had sold over a million units in Japan, and 4.2 million units worldwide in just a few months. For his efforts, Harada was awarded a bonus of about $5,000.

"When I tell this to people in Western game industry, they're very surprised and say, "Why is it so cheap?" Because it was more than 20 years ago, and I didn't complain," Harada says.

"Although 1.33 million units had been sold in Japan, we didn't take it as special. Project staff are young and since we didn't take the Westernized view that developers of famous titles could gain huge incentives, our salaries were on a monthly basis, and didn't change much from other months. Our situation did not change."

In other words, it was time to get back to work.

Meanwhile, rumors swirled that Sony was working on a new console, a successor to the now industry-dominant PlayStation. Though it was not yet known when the new console would be released or what it would look like, reports as early as 1997 spoke of built-in DVD players and modems for online play.

The rumors, of course, were true, and the prospect of a new console left Namco with a decision to make: Develop its next *Tekken* title for the original PlayStation, with a much larger user base but dated technology, or develop for the PlayStation 2, selling to a fraction of the customers but remaining at gaming's cutting edge.

They chose the latter.

Tekken had already become synonymous with the PlayStation brand, and a new game available at launch would further cement that status. It was an opportunity. The new game could be used to show off the impressive power of the PlayStation 2's "Emotion Engine," and — arm-in-arm — they would be unveiled to the world together at the Tokyo Game Show in 1999.

There was only one problem: The PlayStation 2 didn't exist yet.

If Namco waited for Sony to finish development of its console, the new *Tekken* would never be ready in time. It would also jeopardize the lifecycle on which the Tekken Project had come to depend — release a game in arcades as a sort of unofficial beta test, and continue to fine-tune for the console release over the following year.

Instead, they did both. The "next-generation *Tekken*" was developed for arcades using the same 32-bit boards as *Tekken 3*. *Tekken Tag Tournament* was released in Japanese arcades in July of 1999 on the System 12 board. Then it was a sprint to prepare a tech demo for the PlayStation 2's unveiling at Tokyo Game Show that September, and for console launch in early March of 2000.

It was a difficult juggle, but the improved technology of the new console made the team


get the best TAG.
TEKKEN
TAG
TOURNAMENT
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feel as though the shackles had been taken off. Gone were the days of down-rezzing for the console release, or recreating 3-D backgrounds in 2-D. In fact, the opposite was true. Even with a tight schedule and the lack of familiarity with the new technology, the team was able to take *Tekken* graphics to new heights. The tech demo wowed on the TGS stage. And once the game was in the hands of critics, gamers were salivating for the PS2.

Here's Prince Paul of *Gamepro* in early 2000:

> "Visually, *Tekken* on the PS2 blows its arcade parent away with sharper graphics and smoother character polygons. The characters in the early version were loaded with details right down to the variety of their garbs. The fighting backgrounds were also astounding-especially Eddy Gordo's stage where you could see individual blades of grass!"

Tekken and PlayStation remained a match made in polygonal heaven.

Graphics aside, the team decided that a new system warranted new ideas.

In 2-D fighting games, tag team mechanics were already common. The premise was simple: rather than a single fighter, players chose a pair of them. Though battles were still fought one-on-one, the second fighter could be called upon, or tagged in, to change the tide of battle. In 1995, ADK released *Kizuna Encounter* for the Neo-Geo, in which tag mechanics operated similarly to professional wrestling. Players needed to be in a certain area of the arena, color coded to their team, in order to tag in another fighter. Keeping opponents away from their tag zone added an extra layer of strategy to the fights. Over the next few years, Capcom would popularize 2-D tag fighters with their *X-Men vs. Street Fighter* and *Marvel vs. Capcom* games. In those, a tag area was not designated. The other fighter on your team could be called in at any time and would enter the battlefield with a flying kick or combo attack. This made the tag element more dynamic and chaotic, but also more prone to abuse as a source of relentless combos.

Once again, *Tekken* found itself chasing *Street Fighter*. But, once again, what seemed like a simple concept in two dimensions was exponentially more difficult to implement in three.

Figuring out how and from where the other fighter would tag in was the first challenge to overcome. Rather than tagging in from a physical space in the arena like *Kizuna Encounter*, which would limit tags, or having a teammate fly in mid-attack like *Marvel vs. Capcom*, which would



TEKKEN AND PLAYSTATION REMAINED A MATCH MADE IN POLYGONAL HEAVEN.





make tags instantaneous and too unpredictable in a 3-D environment, the *Tekken* team made the brilliant decision to have tagged fighters run in from off-screen toward their opponent. This meant a player could initiate a tag, start a combo, and finish just as the other fighter tagged in to continue juggling the opponent. Certain throws could also initiate a tag automatically. These mechanics not only allowed for interesting fighting strategies, they also allowed both players to anticipate the arrival of the new fighter.

Tekken Tag Tournament (or *TTT*) offered one more small but significant refinement to the tag fighting format. Victory was achieved when either of the two fighters on a team ran out of life meter. In other tag games, both fighters on a team had to be defeated. This made tagging strategic. It wasn't simply one match made bigger. Tagging out could save your life, tagging in an injured character became more risky. Your life bar was only as strong as your weakest character—a true team.

To emphasize this, players could also activate "Netsu Power" in desperate situations. If a fighter was in danger of dying, tagging out would give the other fighter a bonus damage. Netsu Power could easily turn the tide of battle; a dramatic system that would become a precursor to *Tekken 7*'s Rage Arts.

Tag also represented the first non-canonical *Tekken* sequel. No number meant no need to worry about canon or continuity. Almost every fighter from the first three *Tekken* games was included—a way of playfully looking back while the franchise looked forward. Only the original Jack, King (the first), Dr. Bosconovitch, Marshall Law, and Gon failed to make the cut.

The game was one of the most popular PS2 launch titles. But *Tekken Tag Tournament* wasn't an endpoint. It was an investment. The tradeoff for their visually impressive next-gen game was selling to a much smaller audience of new console owners than they ever had before. To make the investment pay off, Harada and the team would have to be ready with a new game as quickly as possible.

This time, there would be no vacation to Hawaii.



TEKKEN 4

A DESTRUCTIBLE ENVIRONMENT

DESPITE HIS larger-than-life reputation and comparisons to Yoshinori Ono of *Street Fighter*, or Hideo Kojima,of *Metal Gear Solid,* when you talk to Katsuhiro Harada, you'll find he's down to earth.. Still, he is a man who believes his own hype. Which – given that Harada has dedicated over 20 years of his life to one game franchise – is *Tekken*'s hype as well.

In the many interviews he gives to gaming publications, Harada is still very much a salesman. He frequently references sales numbers of specific *Tekken* games and the series as a whole (almost 47 million, by the way). He isn't shy about pointing out that *Tekken* has surpassed *Street Fighter* in terms of raw sales. He wants you to see *Tekken* how he sees it – in his mind, how it really is.

Tekken 4 represented yet another opportunity to reinvent the franchise: the type of opportunity Harada had come to relish. Though *Tag Tournament* was the first *Tekken* game on the PlayStation 2, it was not a "pure" *Tekken* game, in the way the world had come to know the franchise: intense one-on-one combat, oozing Mishima Clan soap-opera drama, displayed through mind-blowing graphics. *Tag* had been a stunning graphical display for Namco and Sony at its TGS debut, but – like all first-generation PS2 games – it barely scratched the surface of the new console's full power. And there was more competition than ever to stand out. Polygonal graphics, once a *Tekken* claim to fame, were now everywhere. Not only that, but six months after the PlayStation 2 launch, Nintendo's GameCube and Microsoft's Xbox joined the fray, and the "sixth generation" of console gaming was in full swing.

But in many ways, *4* was *Tekken* Project's first crack at the next-gen hardware. Due to the development timeline, *Tag* had been developed on the same 32-bit board as *Tekken 3* and then souped up for home console release. This time the team had a new arcade board: the System 246. Like the System 11 and 12 before it, which had been modeled after the original PlayStation hardware, the 246 board was based on the hardware of the PlayStation 2.

Though the team had just rebuilt the series graphics from the first polygon with *Tekken 3*, they would do so again for its direct sequel. New

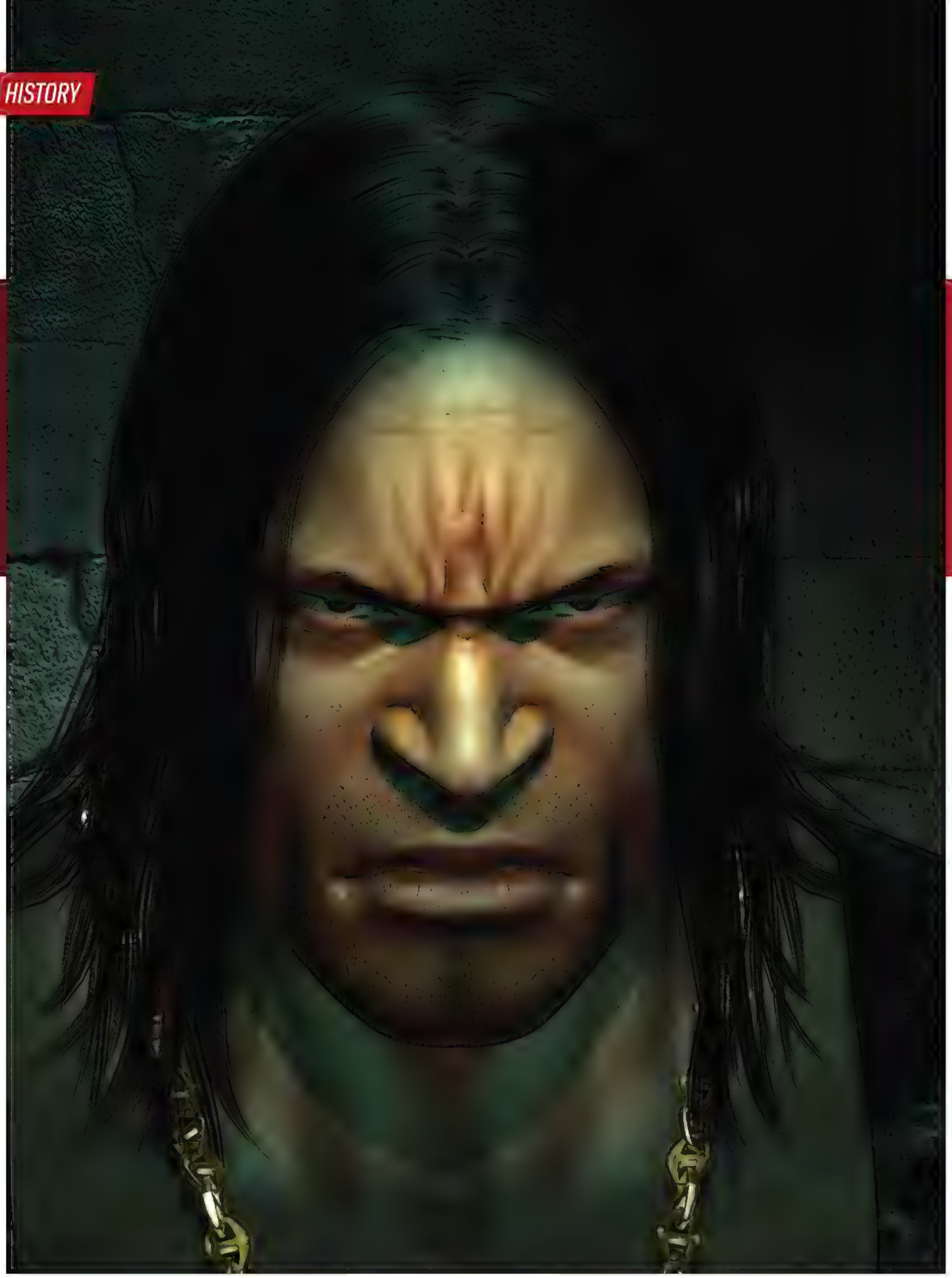
Two years after since the last tournament,
the legend of new battle begins.

THE KING OF IRONFIST TOURNAMENT

TEKKEN 4™

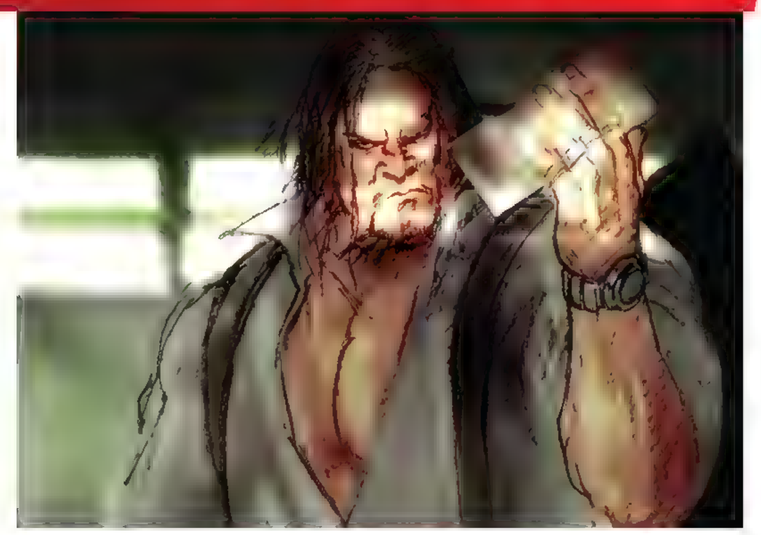
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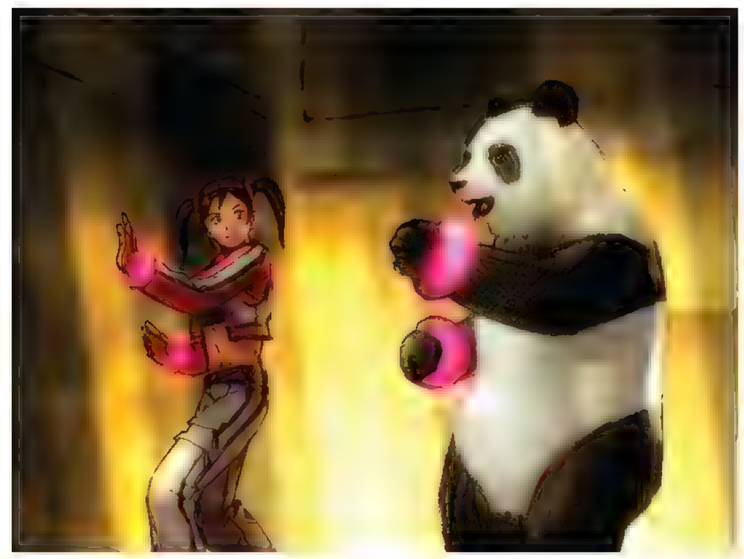
— Tournament Final : Entries —





FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE SERIES, ARENA ENVIRONMENTS BECAME INTERACTIVE. YOU COULD KICK AN OPPONENT THROUGH A WALL, OR CHUCK THEM AT A TELEPHONE BOOTH.





physics, new textures and lighting effects, new environments – graphical upgrades that pushed the limits of the PS2 hardware.

New environments. Harada and the team quickly realized that there was more to their new graphics engine than a pretty face. It offered them the opportunity to experiment with *Tekken*'s gameplay as well. For the first time in the series, arena environments became interactive. You could kick an opponent through a wall, or chuck them at a telephone booth. Being pinned to the wall took on a more dynamic set of consequences depending on the arena and the placement of destructible obstacles. To counteract the increased importance of walls, designers also implemented a "switch maneuver," which – with proper timing – shoves the opponent in a chosen direction (something like a grab).

Another experimental wrinkle was that fighters could now move around before the start of the match. Did you want to begin the match in your opponent's grill, or gain extra distance to prepare your defenses and plan your entry of attack? Now you could. This didn't have a huge impact on match results, but it was a new feature all the same.

Tekken 4 was released to the kinds of rave reviews to which Harada and Namco had grown accustomed. But this time, the fanfare did not last.

Longtime fans pushed back against the new changes. They found the destructible environments to be a gimmick that distracted from the core gameplay. They also found that the more realistic movement of characters felt slower. This lead to the discovery that quick jabs were disproportionately strong, which meant that some characters – those who emphasized defense or kicks – were disproportionately weak.

This imbalance was most evident at the highest levels of competition. Almost every top player mained Jin – not necessarily because they wanted to, but because it was foolish not too.

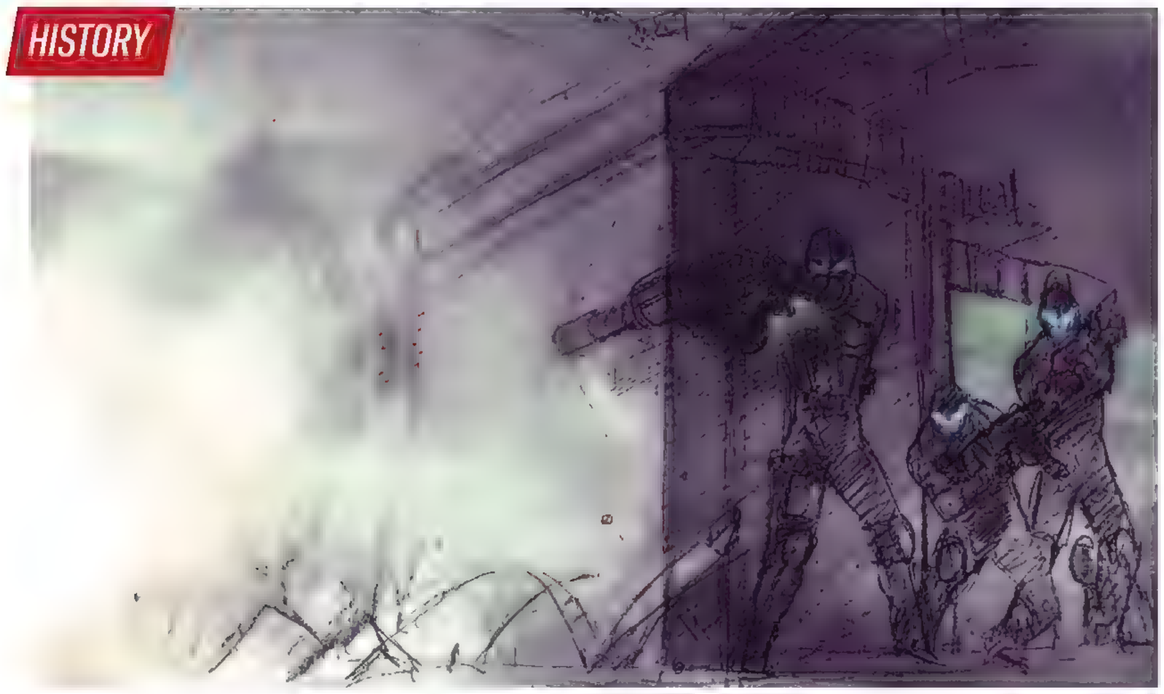
In pushing the series forward, parts of *Tekken*'s foundation, like an emphasis on balance, had been left behind.





































Even the upgraded graphics came with growing pains. The PS2 hardware had limited RAM (Random Access Memory), which could otherwise be expanded on a PC or, say, an arcade board. To get the graphics to run properly required complicated compression that presented a steep learning curve for all developers – not just Namco.

"At that time, the memory of PS2 hardware doesn't have enough space, and "compress" technology used for *Tekken 4* wasn't good, and when you watch carefully, characters are shaking in the screens," says Kei Kudo, who would become Lead Programmer after joining the team for *Tekken 5*.

Tekken 4 was still a good game. The early reviews can attest to that. And for many, especially those who found the series with *4*, it is still beloved. But it was not the giant leap forward that each of the preceding games in the series had represented. The original, the improvement, the rebirth, the next-gen leap. *Tekken 4* felt like any other sequel.

Was it all of the small changes, all of the little missteps, adding up to something fans did not enjoy? Or was there something deeper at play, something more disconcerting: After four games in seven years, were people just tired of *Tekken*?

For Harada, who has each of his game's sales figures memorized, the proof was in the pudding. *Tekken 4* represented a series low in terms of sales. Despite many million more PlayStation 2s selling between *Tag Tournament* and *Tekken 4* – which in theory meant a larger consumer base on the best-selling console in history, *Tekken 4* sold fewer copies than *Tag Tournament*. Fine for most games, but not for *Tekken*.

Even after five *Tekken* games – three since taking on the role of series director – Harada had a lot to learn. To fix what ailed the franchise, he would need to look not forward to the future of *Tekken*, but back at what had carried it this far.

AFTER FOUR GAMES IN SEVEN YEARS, WERE PEOPLE JUST TIRED OF TEKKEN?







TALKING THE TALK

WRAPPING YOUR EARS AROUND TEKKEN'S DENSE LINGO

IF YOU'RE STREAMING or attending a *Tekken* tournament for the first time, you'll find yourself struggling to master a whole new vocabulary.

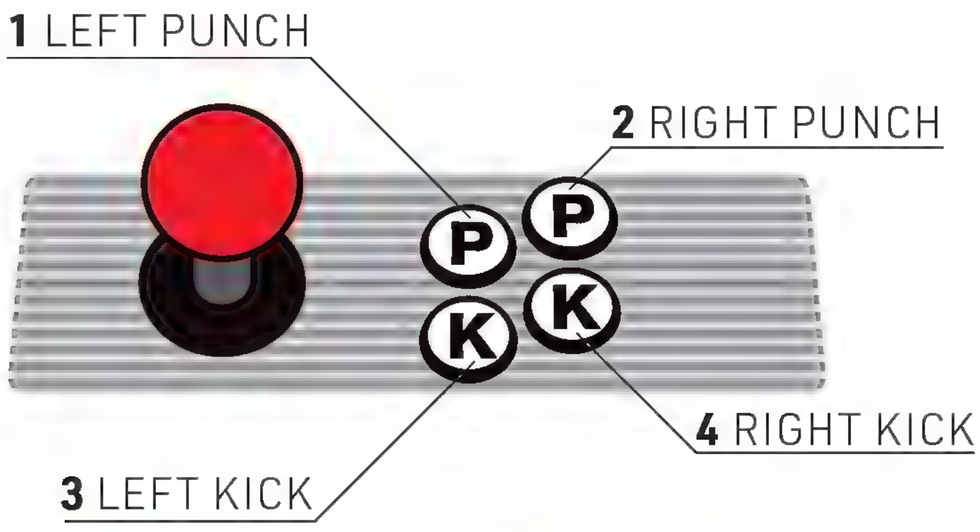
"Down-back one."
"Oh, a three plus four."
"With the cancel!"
"PUNISH!"

"It's like a different language," says Steve "Tasty" Scott, a prominent American *Tekken* commentator.

With dozens of characters, each with hundreds of moves—many of which with their own abbreviations—plus esoteric community jargon, it can be a lot to take in, not unlike trying to watch a new sport for the first time. There are rules, players, clocks, strategies. Ultimately, understanding what's going on "comes from exposure," according to Scott.

But there is an accessible shorthand to *Tekken* lingo. Just a handful a key terms can exponentially increase your understanding of the frantic commentator banter.

Tekken has a four-button layout, perfectly suited to the PlayStation controller or traditional arcade cabinet. Each button corresponds to a different limb: left arm, right arm, left leg, right leg. Moving around the controller from top to bottom, left to right, *Tekken* players assign each button a number for easy reference.

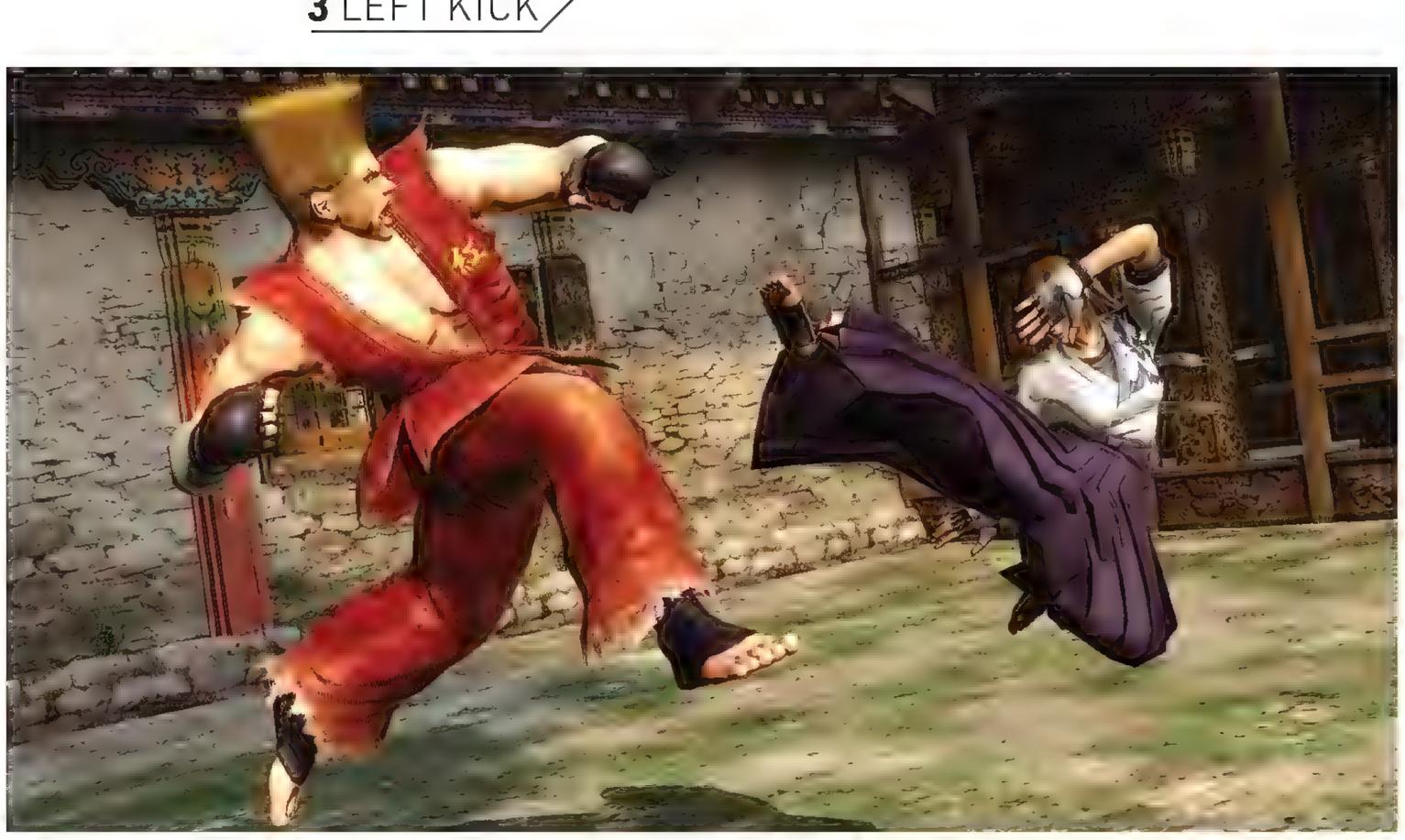

















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Looking to brush up on your *Tekken* lingo? Below is a glossary of some of the series' most common phrases, bound to make your next tournament experience sound a lot less alien.

ACTIVE FRAMES
The time (measured in frames) when a move's damage actually gets inflicted on the opponent. Normally, moves only have a one-frame interval but some moves will have bigger active frame window, which can affect other properties of an attack, depending on the situation.

BOUNCE
An attack that slams your opponent in the floor, making them "bounce" and letting you continue the combo.

BROKEN
1. Refers to moves that have been nullified by specific actions (i.e. throw-breaking or chickening).
2. A word that is used for moves that are popularly considered either too weak or too overpowered.

CANCEL
The act of cancelling a move in order to regain mobility or extend a combo. (For example, a backdash cancel, or a sidestep cancel.)

CHICKEN
1. A move that prevents a reversal.
2. A word that is used when a player reverses a opponent's reversal. This is an homage to a bug in earlier *Tekken* games, in which the announcer says "Chicken!" under those circumstances.

COUNTER/COUNTERHIT
Hitting your opponent when they're still starting an attack. Countering causes higher damage output on your attack and can generate additional factors in your favor, depending on your attack.

CROUCH CANCEL
Pressing FF when on crouch status to be able to perform normal moves more quickly. Very useful in juggles.

CRUSH
Characteristic of moves that are invincible to a specific kind of attack in a certain frame or frames.

EAT / ATE
To get hit directly by a move.

FLOORBREAK
When the opponent gets spiked through a breakable floor, bringing both combatants into a different part of the stage. Useful in combos.





All further gameplay is built from that foundation. Attacks are made and modified with those buttons, in conjunction with movement on the joystick (up, down, forward, back) or intermediate directions (up-forward, up-back, down-forward, down-back). In combination, you end up with phrases like "down-back one," which register instantly with the seasoned *Tekken* player.

Of course, there are numerous other slang terms to describe nuances of the game. "One plus three" and "two plus four" describe throws executed with specific combinations of buttons. And there are literally dozens of one, two, and three-letter abbreviations for specific moves and stances of specific characters.

Like the game itself, it's easy to pick up, but difficult to master.

So what's a commentator to do? Appeal to the masses, or show off the depths of their *Tekken* knowledge?

Aris "Avoiding the Puddle" Bakhtanians, one of the most recognizable faces in the North American *Tekken* scene, thinks commentators should avoid jargon.

"It's really better to say what [the move] is rather than how to do it. In fact, I think it's really a good idea to try and avoid even saying how to do it. Either you say the name of the move, or if you don't know the name of the move, make up a move name for it—if you're not going to make up a move name for it, last resort, say what it does. 'Goes for the mid,' or 'Goes for a mid out of crouch.' It's just a lot better," Aris says on his stream.

"Up-forward three," for example, is a description of how you execute the move—not what it does. In other words, it doesn't describe what you're seeing or how it might affect the match.

Not all commentators agree.

Though he prides himself on his ability to

break things down in layman's terms, Steve Scott thinks using the lingo is the only way to account for everything that's happening in a *Tekken* match. And making things a little difficult to grasp has benefits, too, he argues.

"The minute any sort of basic understanding happens, my job is done," Scott says. "But if you say, hey, I want to learn what he's talking about in a little more depth – I feel like part of my job is to make that appealing."

For him, jargon is a tool to draw new players into the game, not keep them away.

But even if all commentators could agree on the preferred complexity of their vocabulary, they haven't all agreed on the jargon itself..

"Instead of one plus two, I say twelve. Instead of three plus four, I say thirty-four," Scott says. This is not how you'll hear most commentators use the shorthand. "People make fun of that lingo, but it all came from the culture, that's the scene that I played in. They say, why don't you just say 'one plus two,' or 'three plus four'? Because I don't want to. It's so embedded in the culture. I can go back to St. Louis and talk to my friends about *Tekken* no problem."

Even Aris would agree with that. He's credited with incorporating Japanese phrases into English *Tekken* commentary, despite commentating for a Western audience.

"I happen to be a really big fan of Japanese commentary, and I've been listening to it for years. Since I was young I've known that 'nage' means throw. They'd yell it, too. Get hype about it," Aris says. Using "nage" when a player pulls off a throw is his way of showing respect for Japanese commentators.

"Onuki is my favorite," he says. Shinya "Nuki" Onuki is one of the most respected Japanese fighting game personalities – though he





FOXSTEP
A move that can be performed facing either towards or away from opponent.

FRAME / FRAMERATE
A unit of time used for accurately measuring game-related speeds. *Tekken* currently runs at 60 frames per second.

FREE HIT
A move that is sure to land when executed at the proper moment.

GETUP KICK
Any kick performed from any knockdown position.

GROUND GAME (OKIZEME / OKI)
The art of beating the hell out of an opposing character who is lying on the ground.

I(MOVE NAME)
"Instant (move name)," a move that must be performed as fast as possible.

I(NUMBER)
The number of frames a move takes at its fastest possible execution speed.

JAIL / IN JAIL
A move property where a combination locks the opponent into a blocking state after the first blocked hit, regardless subsequent attempts to move, duck, evade, or attack.

JUGGLE
The art and practice of hitting an opponent such that they remain airborne.

JUGGLE STARTER / LAUNCHER
A move or a combination of moves that gets the opponent into the air and sets them up for a juggle.

MASHER
Someone who randomly hits buttons without any idea of proper gameplay.

MIX-UP
A series of moves available that allow players to vary combos to keep their opponents guessing.

MIRROR MATCH
A fight where both players use the same character.

NATURAL COMBO
A move string that is sure to hit the opponent if the move that precedes it connects properly.

PARLOR TRICKS
Deceptive setups that have major counters or defensive holes. Parlor tricks can catch even highly competent opponents off guard from time to time, but their glaring weaknesses make overuse risky.

PARRY
A move that deflects an opponent's attack to give you a momentary advantage, in terms of either positioning or timing.

POKE
To do minor damage to an opponent, usually for the purposes of hit-and-run tactics, disrupting combos, or setting up for bigger-damage moves.

PUMMEL
Performing combos in conjunction with walls.

PUNISH
To hit an opponent who is unable to resist or counter. Usually takes place after certain moves are blocked or whiffed

PUSHBACK
Property of moves that "push back" a blocking opponent.

RECOVERY / RECOVERY FRAMES
Time required before the animation of a move ends and the character is allowed to perform another move.

REVERSAL
A maneuver that enables you to grab an opponent's limb during his move and perform a fancy throw animation, damaging your opponent.

SABAKI
A move that auto-reverses certain attacks during its animation.

SAFE
A move that will not yield free hits when blocked.

SET-UP
A series of moves designed to confuse and guide your opponent into doing exactly what you want them to do, usually to render them vulnerable to launchers or powerful moves.

SPAM
To repeat a move again and again.

SPIKE
A downward attack from a juggle that throws your opponent into the ground with significant force, preventing to tech rolls.

primarily commentates for *Street Fighter*.

"I don't even know what he's saying," Aris adds. "But that's what makes him so amazing."

Like your favorite basketball play-by-play announcer, each commentator has his or her own approach and style. The important thing for most of them is to keep their energy high and the viewers engaged.

Sometimes achieving great commentary is a simple matter of having the right co-commentator: a "color guy" and a "play-by-play guy," just like the duos you see on televised sports.

"If my co-commentator is somebody that I know and that I've known for a long time, before I even start talking to him I can know what to expect. Anybody that I know, it's easy to do smalltalk with those people. You've gotta be able to bullshit hot air, *hot air*, nonstop" Aris emphasizes. "Honestly, I have a lot of practice. All I do is I talk, and I stream to myself in an empty room," he says, referring to his almost daily online streams.

Scott and Aris have co-commentated plenty of times. For both of them, commentating has changed a lot over the years.

"It's become very serious," Aris says. "It's like a job. You get a boss, you gotta shake that boss's hand, and they expect you to bring the heat.

"But if you do it enough, at least for me, whenever I get nervous, I just think to myself – don't worry about it. And I don't. And I just sit down and talk shit and it's good times."







"It's like a different language."

–STEVE "TASTY" SCOTT

TAUNT
A character move that does nothing but mock an opponent.

TECH CATCH
A juggling set-up designed to re-launch your opponent and/or give you free damage if they tech-roll.

TECH TRAP
1. A mix-up forced upon an opponent as they tech-roll, taking advantage of the fact that they can only block, which provides the attacker with the freedom to perform a mid/low mix-up.
2. Sometimes used in the definition of [tech catch].

TECH ROLL
A special move performed when a character is hit by a move that knocks them up in the air (not exclusive to launchers). A tech roll can reduce the damage the character sustains or return them to a standing position more quickly.

TENSTRING
A term that refers to *Tekken* characters' ten-hit movestrings.

THROW / NAGE
A move that throws an opponent.

TURTLE
A play style that emphasizes defensive tactics.

WAKE UP
1. To stand up from the ground.
2. The art of standing up from the ground while avoiding as much damage as possible.

WALL CARRY
A move or series of moves, usually in a juggle, designed to bring the opposing player nearer to the wall.

WALL JUMP
A special move performed against a wall, usually a fancy flip or attack. Mostly used to dodge an opponent attack and corner them against a wall.

WALL SPLAT
Occurs when a character "sticks" and gets stunned against the wall due to moves that drives him/her there or carry them there.



TEKKEN 5

BUILDING A REPUTATION

AFTER THE RELEASE of *Tekken 4*, Harada left Namco.

"Namco was a company sharing ups and downs. For example, although development teams of library and middleware wouldn't generate profits, *Tekken* projects had covered those research and human resource costs," Harada says of the time before he left. There was a pressure on his team, and on him personally, to keep the entire company aloft.

"Leading the biggest project in the company came with a lot of friction. Especially close to Master Submission, our project took a lot of resources from other teams. Since *Tekken* was earning a lot, some people got jealous and hated us. Some people [inside the company] said that they didn't want to join *Tekken* projects."

Whether or not internal pressures contributed to his departure, he won't say. But the critical reaction to *Tekken 4* did not play a role.

"I've never thought about quitting [because of] game evaluations and fan communities," he says.

Still, either due to internal pressures, or his own feelings about the game's success – or because he had been working on *Tekken* for a decade non-stop – he left. He needed to reevaluate his life's priorities. Stepping outside of the rigorous *Tekken* development cycle for the first time offered him some much-needed perspective.

"In the '90s, my boss at the time told me, 'When the situation is bad, you have to support others, so when your situation is bad, others will support you. That's one of the reasons why we're gathering and working together,'" Harada recalls. As for the internal jealousy, he says, "I've never suffered from that stuff. My boss kept telling me that selling titles would support everyone, and that creating *Tekken* was my mission.

"I was impressed and convinced then. That's why I decided to continue *Tekken* for 10, 20 years longer."

After a year away, Harada went back. There was another reason for his return, of course – one that had nothing to do with revenues or copies sold.

"The truth is simple. The reason is because I'm the person who loves fighting game genre most in the world. If this characteristic would benefit players, companies, my family... that would be awesome."

Like Kazuya, who had survived his fall into a volcano years earlier, Harada returned stronger than ever, ready to defeat his demons.

The Walden Galleria is the biggest mall in Buffalo, New York. In the food court, nestled between the Subway and the chain Japanese restaurant, there used to be an arcade: a small, dark corner of the mall that went unnoticed by most mall patrons, even Nordstrom employees and elderly mall walkers. There was a claw game, a Cruisin' USA, a Dance Dance Revolution. And in late 2004, there was a *Tekken 5* cabinet.

Joe Bennett and his older brother were on a mission to find it. And they brought their PlayStation controllers with them.

The Bennett brothers, who grew up playing *Tekken 3* and *Tekken Tag* on consoles, weren't confused about the distinction between their living room one-on-one sessions and the nuances of arcade machine combat. But they had heard that this arcade machine was different.

"The unique thing about the *Tekken 5* machine was that actually allowed you to plug in a PlayStation controller," Bennett says. "Because I grew up playing with my brother on the console, that's what I was comfortable with. So we would bring our PlayStation controllers to the arcade and plug them in and that's how we kept on playing through the arcade days on pad.


TEKKEN 5
TM







It's not there anymore, but it survived a lot longer than most arcades."

The PS2 controller ports were the culmination of the co-evolution of *Tekken* on console and *Tekken* on cabinet. Or perhaps merely the next phase of that evolution. But in an era when the landscape of arcades looked bleak, threatening the very nature of *Tekken*'s battle-tested development cycle, the addition of the ports was more than a convenience.

"When you get into the arcade scene, you meet all these people, and that's how you start getting into it competitively. That's how I started finding out about tournaments, the whole scene – that's been it from there, I've been playing *Tekken* competitively since I was 12 years old," Bennett says.

Bennett's story is not unique. You could be a *Tekken* fan in your living room, but you wouldn't be part of the *Tekken* scene. The scene was at the arcade. Even in late 2004, that's where you would meet the crusty vets and the young prodigies; that's where you found other people who loved *Tekken*.

Even through the dog days of *Tekken 4*, the scene never really went away. Fans kept showing up, kept playing, kept competing. This is what they did. The PS2 gamepad ports brought a lot of young players like Bennett to the scene in their neighborhood they would otherwise never have known existed – and showed cabinet die-hards that some console players were a force to be reckoned with. For the first time in some years, the *Tekken* scene grew.

As if to prove it, the *Tekken 5* cabinet was built with another key innovation. Data cards.

In *Tekken*, like most competitive games, player tags are common. No one really goes by their real name. Some of your close friends might not even know your real name. The first time you slide a data card into a *Tekken 5* cabinet, you enter your player name. You might have a nickname you've gone by for years. For new players, there was some pressure.

"I played a lot of Bryan Fury at the time, so my brother said, 'Put in Joey Fury, that sounds dope!" Bennett says. He's been "Joey Fury" ever since. "Even though in real life everyone calls me Joe."

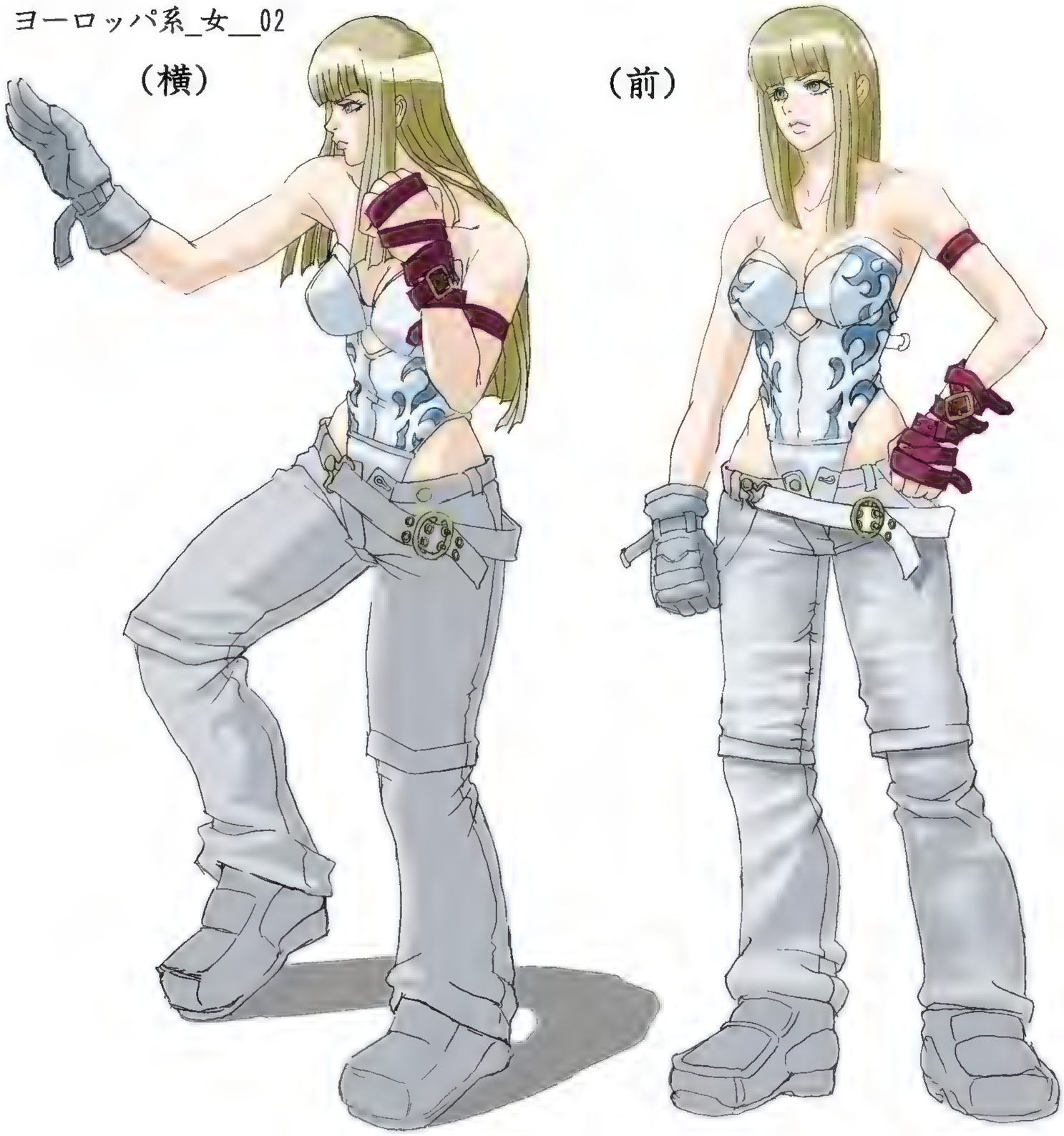
"I'm a King player, but I love Jin. I used to play Jin a lot," recalls regular *Tekken* commentator Steven Scott. Under pressure to enter a meaningful name, he chose 4gottenKazama. A lot of Tekken names are like this – a reference to a favorite character. Though sometimes, like in Scott's case, it doesn't stick – he's a King player, after all. He now goes by Tasty_Steve. Tray "P. Ling" Sherman originally went by Princess Ling, a reference to his main character, but shortened it when he was mistaken for a woman one too many times.

For other players, their nickname was given to them by other local Iron Fist junkies.

"I started really, really young, younger than most players would start in the fighting game

LIKE KAZUYA, WHO HAD SURVIVED HIS FALL INTO A VOLCANO YEARS EARLIER, HARADA RETURNED STRONGER THAN EVER, READY TO DEFEAT HIS DEMONS.





community these days. I was probably 10 years old while everyone else there was 18 or older," Hoa Luu recalls. Mall employees on break, or their friends coming to visit. "When I first started going, I got whooped."

But he kept coming back. His father took an interest in his improvement and passion for the game, and would drive him to the mall arcade almost every day. In the mall movie theater, *Star Wars: Episode I* had just hit screens. And from there, Luu's nickname was born.

"They took notice of me after I started to show a little bit of improvement. They used to call me the whole thing: Young Anakin Skywalker, or The Chosen One," he says. "But eventually it just became Anakin."

However you got your nickname, the data cards made it a part of your *Tekken* identity. It tracked your worldwide player rank, your win / loss record and win percentage, and how much money you had accumulated in game. That money could be used to unlock alternate outfits for your characters, a first in the series. All of it helped build your *Tekken* identity – one that could now be transported to any arcade in the world.

On consoles, *Tekken 5* would sell over 6 million copies worldwide. It was a return to the sales charts – and a return to form. The *Tekken* scene was back in a big way.

It helped that the game itself was good.

The Tekken team began by getting rid of the noise. They did away with pre-fight player movement and uneven terrain. They amped the speed of character movment back to pre-*Tekken 4* levels. Destructible environments remained, but were pared down and refined. Wall juggles became much more difficult to pull off and much easier to defend. Switch position moves were eliminated for every character not named Steve Fox. And some new infinite levels were added back – wall-free combat areas to give players a respite from dreaded walls.

All of the jarring "refinements" of *Tekken 4* were removed to encourage skeptical diehards











back into the fray. Classic elements that *4* had removed, even inadvertently, were reinstated. Juggles, for example, made exceedingly difficult to the point that they might as well have been removed from *4*, were back in *5*, along with more aerial leaps and attacks. Going back to what had always worked allowed the team to focus on making those familiar ingredients even better.

To combat the PlayStation 2's finicky compression issues, the team needed to bring in a heavy hitter. Harada assigned Kei Kudo to the task. Kudo was a promising young programmer who had come up on the latest technology.

"At that time, the memory of PS2 hardware doesn't have enough space, and compression technology used for *Tekken 4* wasn't good," Kudo says. "When you watch carefully, characters are shaking in the screens. I was glad that I took my time and succeeded in developing compression technology that make data size smaller, and more accurate. This technology is still used in some parts [of *Tekken 7*]."

Kudo would go on to become *Tekken* Project's Lead Programmer.

With Kudo's expertise and two more years experience with the PlayStation hardware, *Tekken 5* finally made good on the next-gen graphics that Sony had promised to the TGS crowd five years before, when they showed off *Tag Tournament* to the world.

But while the team looked back at past games to guide them, they also looked forward. *Tekken 5* was a gleeful gift to series fans. The PS2 ports and Data Cards and customizable characters made it a game about the player. The game came with 32 characters, an unprecedented roster size. Lead by a rejuvenated Harada, the Tekken team made a pure *Tekken* game that wasn't afraid to be just that: *Tekken*. Even as the series marched forward into its second decade, they learned there were some things about it that would never change.

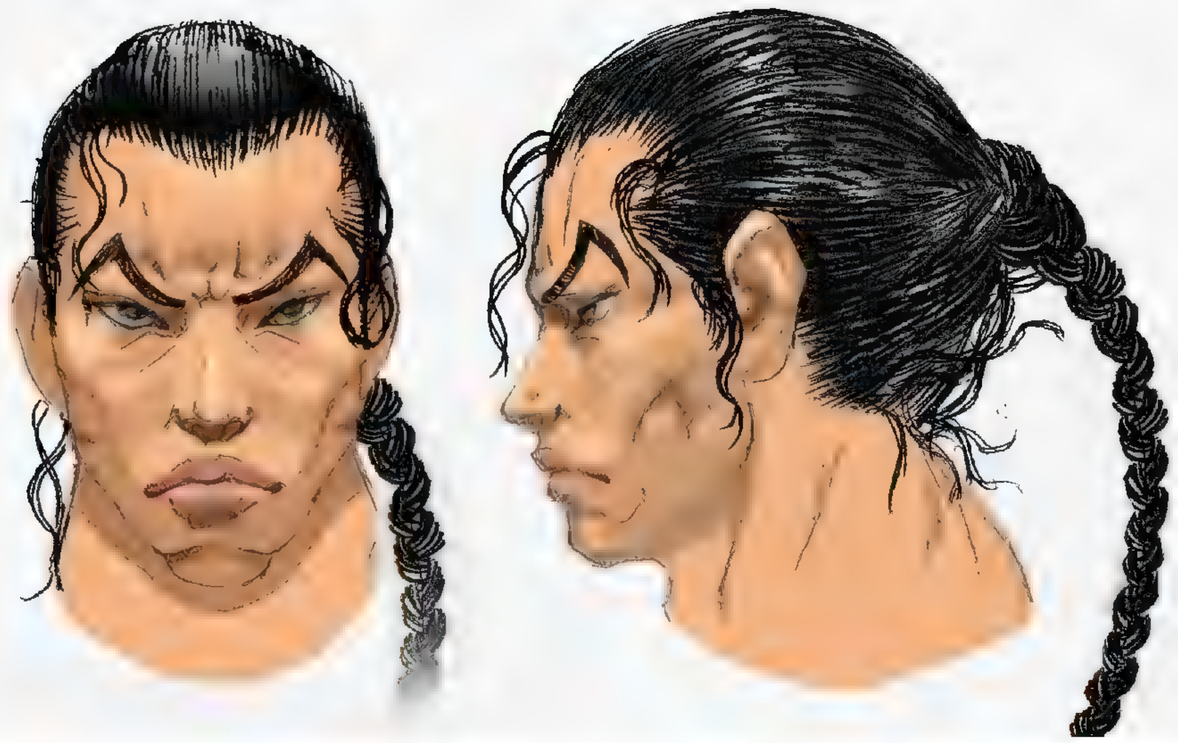
Just like Harada himself.

"When I was a kid, adults and teachers said, "Doing your favorite things won't feed you, you have to think about hobbies separate from your job." I couldn't bear that. I thought, "I can't give up what I like!" That's why I tried hard," he says.

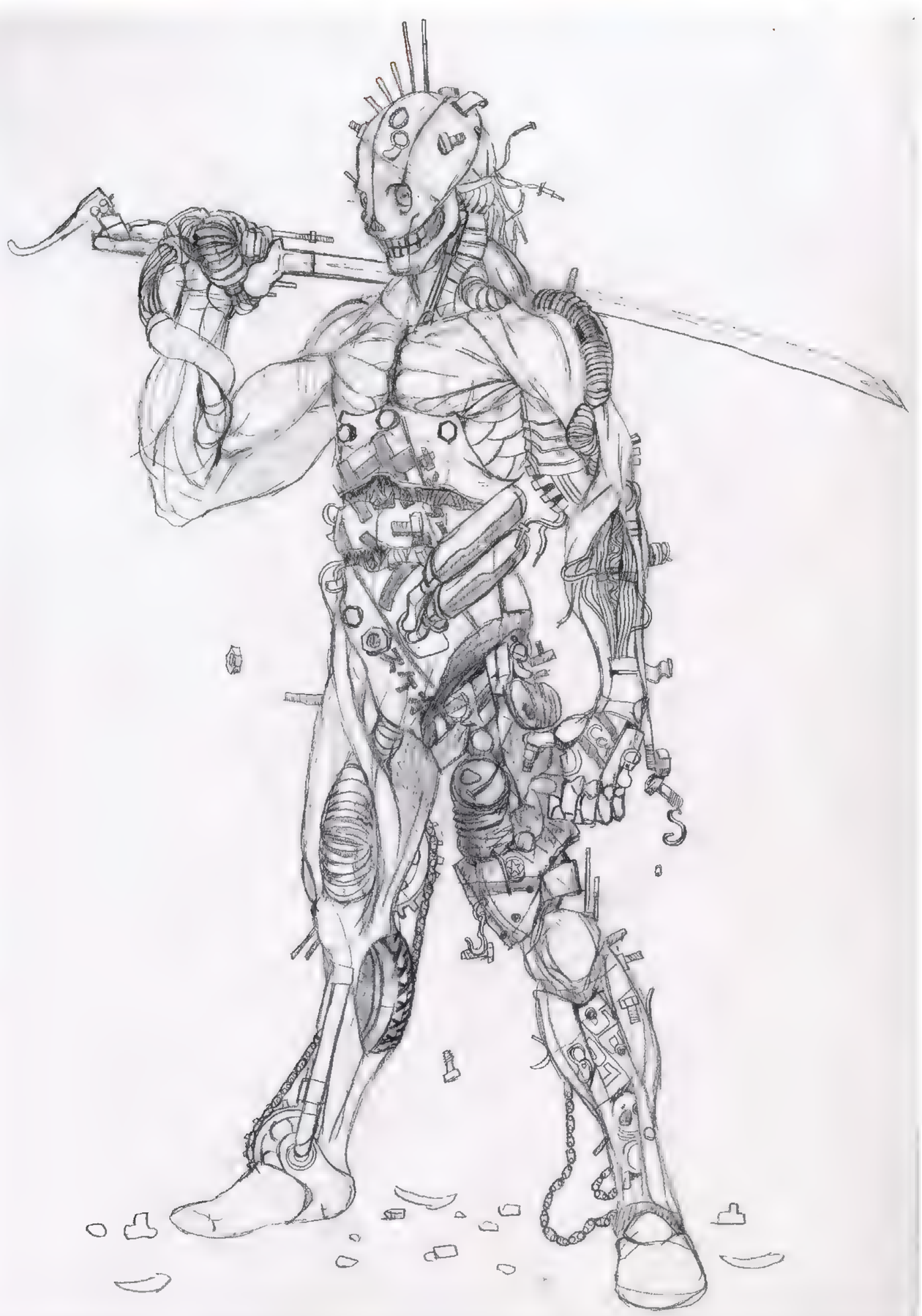
Maybe for most people, what teachers told Harada is true. But what about for the person who loves fighting games most of all? This is the source of Harada's obsession with sales figures; of his drive to outlive every other fighting game franchise.

"You have to objectively prove that you're the one who likes it best. For that reason, I tried hard to increase the sales of *Tekken* franchise," he explains.

"And, as a result, I think I've proved that I like the fighting games best."









Tekken 5 **unused character designs**

VS. GAMEPAD JOYSTICK



SINCE THE ORIGINS of *Tekken*, one question has plagued fans and competitors more than any other: a question that has separated friends and factions and cuts to the very heart of what it means to play *Tekken*:

Gamepad or joystick?

In most competitive fighting games, the joystick is the undisputed favorite. There's an entire cottage industry of custom third-party joysticks. They're a status symbol. Serious about the game? Want a "pure" (read: arcade) fighting experience, even at home? Get your own stick.

With other fighters, mapping a five or six-button control scheme to a console gamepad becomes cumbersome. It's not impossible, but one or two buttons will pretty much always end up feeling out of place. Combos become contortions, fingers winding uncomfortably around a controller. Even with the right muscle memory, there's no comparison to the cabinet layout. No such trouble for the *Tekken* player. It's not simpler—it just *fits*.

The uniquely symbiotic relationship between *Tekken*'s arcade and console releases make pad versus stick a viable debate. *Tekken* was designed for arcade release, of course, but was also designed with the PlayStation controller in mind: four buttons for four limbs.

Tekken 5 further extended the debate. The *Tekken 5* cabinet release included a USB port at each player station—the same kind used for controllers on the PS2. Players who had cut their teeth on console releases could bring a gamepad from home and go head-to-head with cabinet joystick devotees.

"A lot of people who grew up playing in arcades, they play on stick. But the unique thing about the *Tekken 5* machine was that [it] actually allowed you to plug in a PlayStation controller. So we would bring our PlayStation controllers to the arcade and plug them in, and that's how we kept on playing through the arcade days on pad," says Joe "Joey Fury" Bennett, a professional player from Buffalo, New York. "I'm not very good on stick, even though I guess people would consider me an old school *Tekken* player."

In 2004, there was still a bit of snobbery associated with arcade purity. You might be











scoffed at or looked down upon for unwinding your cord and plugging in a PS2 DualShock2 in an arcade—that is, until you started winning.

"Because the Japanese and Korean players are considered peak skill worldwide, and they all play on stick, it creates an impression in people's minds that it's better. Like, oh, there's a higher ceiling on stick. I don't really see it that way; to me it's just different ways of putting your ideas in your head into the game. Input, output. It's as simple as that," Fury says.

These days, equality of the controller choices is backed up by any high level tournament. There, every competitor brings their own controller, and roughly half opt for a PS4 gamepad.

"Because I grew up playing with my brother on the console, that's what I was comfortable with," Fury says. "I don't really see one of being better than the other. Some of the best players in the United States have used pad. A really dominant *Tekken* player for a long time was Fighting GM, and he played on pad."

Across the board, background seems to be the deciding factor: How did you learn *Tekken*? If it was at the arcade, you probably still use a joystick. If it was in your cousin's living room, you probably still use a gamepad.

For some players the answer, surprisingly, is... both.

"I find myself playing more and more arcade stick these days," says Hoa "Anakin" Luu, who plays in tournaments using a pad. "Just for fun. And because it replicates the arcade feeling so well. The more I play the more I find the gap is being closed between the pad and the arcade stick, and at some point I'm going to hit a crossroad and decide if I'm going to go full arcade or go controller."

"Yeah, that's crazy. Most guys can't do that," said P. Ling. "I switched to stick for a month before my first tournament, but I kept breaking controllers."

But gamepad vs. joystick is the *easy* question. The real dilemma?

Who's your fighter?

CHOOSE YOUR CHARACTER

KAZUYA MISHIMA

IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO MEET YOUR END!

Kazuya was raised as the heir to the Mishima Zaibatsu, but rebelled against his father Heihachi. After awakening the power of the devil within him, he's finally able to control it.

THE DEVIL IN DISGUISE

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: JAPAN
FIGHTING STYLE: MISHIMA KARATE
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN*



THOUGH HIS SON would eventually become the series protagonist, and his father has always had a slight edge when it comes to iconic hair, Kazuya Mishima is the true center of the *Tekken* series, and emblematic of everything that makes it unique.

Kazuya began as a fairly formulaic fighting-game protagonist – the spiritual equivalent to *Street Fighter*'s Ryu, right down to his white pants and red gloves. But Kazuya would soon shed the predictable role in favor of something exponentially more complex.

From the first *Tekken*, Kazuya's tale has been marked by tragedy. Determined to turn him into a world class fighter, Kazuya's father Heihachi brought new meaning to the term "tough love" when he threw his prepubescent son off a cliff. In Heihachi's estimation, if Kazuya were truly worthy of the Mishima name then he would survive the fall and be made stronger for it.

Oh, and that was *after* Heihachi had killed Kazuya's mother.

Kazuya did survive the fall – and dedicated his life to becoming a fighter worthy of his father's brutal legacy. After winning the first King of Iron Fist Tournament, Kazuya got revenge against his father, and took over the Mishima Zaibatsu.

Kazuya's iconic backstory was simple enough to propel *Tekken*'s original plot, but it has gained layers of complexity over nearly a quarter century of games. In *Tekken* 2, Kazuya became the villain. Not only did he continue the worst of his father's leadership practices as the head of the Zaibatsu; but, players soon learned, he hid an even more sinister secret within: the Devil Gene. It was this gene that had allowed



CHARACTER EVOLUTION



TEKKEN 1

TEKKEN 5

TEKKEN 6









Kazuya to survive being thrown from the cliff, and which would eventually cause a demonic transformation – complete with horns, spiked wings, hovering claws and burning red eyes.

He may have been hamfisted personification of evil, but Kazuya's transformation was also an early sign that *Tekken* would not be content to recycle the same iconic characters and the loose set of dynamics between them. *Tekken*'s characters have been recontextualized over and over again – their defining characteristics remain consistent, but their contexts change, and stay fresh and compelling. This begins and ends with Kazuya Mishima.

Since *Tekken 2*, Kazuya and his father have taken turns as series villains: two bright, burning stars orbiting one another, vying for universal power, while the rest of Tekken's cast are caught in their gravity, drawn into conflict and ruin.

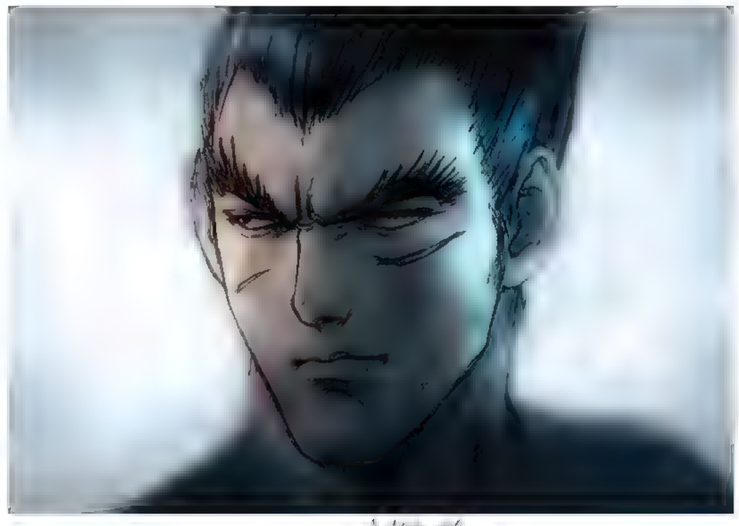






Video games in general and fighting games in particular are no strangers to plots that are – how should we say this – a touch farfetched. More often, those plots are window dressing rather than a reason to play unto themselves. No fighting game understands this better than *Tekken*.

Look no further than Kazuya's Devil Gene. It's lore that clearly illustrates where the borders of *Tekken* lie. In the recurring, simplistic context of a fighting tournament, the Iron Fist Tournament is about so much more than the world's best fighters gathering to punch one another into oblivion. Kazuya Mishima represents a power fantasy in which even the power of the devil itself is tied to heredity, to family. And in that brilliant way, *Tekken* establishes that regardless the scope of its context – one that encompasses monsters and lasers and ancient, unearthed powers, and regular humans with irregular physical abilities – *Tekken*, like *Star Wars*, will always ultimately be about the conflict between a father and a son.

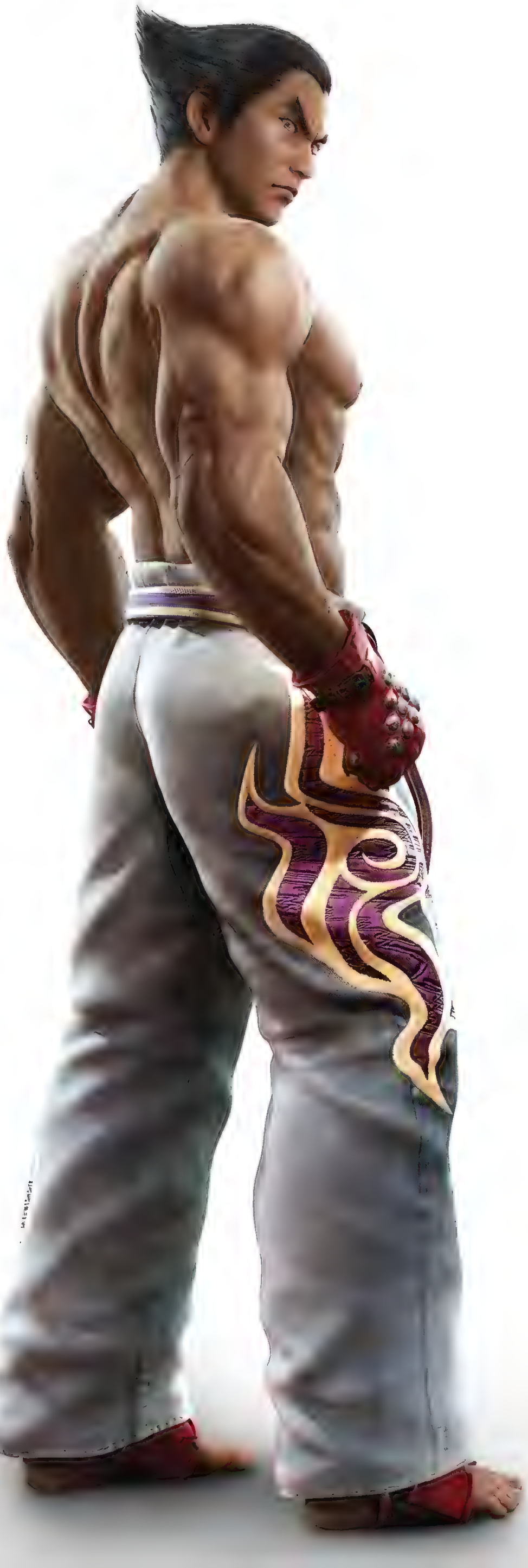












SIGNATURE MOVES



ELECTRIC WIND GOD FIST



ABOLISHING FIST

STATURE SMASH

HEIHACHI MISHIMA

YOU FOOL! I AM INVINCIBLE!

The original leader of the Mishima Zaibatsu, and the fighter known as the "King of the Iron Fist."

Heihachi continues to fight for control of the Mishima Zaibatsu against his son, Kazuya, and his grandson, Jin.

After having recovered from the injuries he sustained in the suicide attack on him from the G Corporation's Jack units, Heihachi is back with an iron fist – and body to match.

THE POWERFUL PATRIARCH

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: JAPAN
FIGHTING STYLE: MISHIMA KARATE
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN*



ONE GLANCE AT Heihachi Mishima–his face or his dossier–will tell you that he's one evil guy.. Let's check the credentials:

- Evil hair
- Evil scowl (no smiling!)
- Evil corporation
- Murdered his wife
- Attempted to murder his son

And that's just for starters.

But unlike his brooding son, who began as the series protagonist before literally becoming the Devil, Heihachi began as the antagonist and has spent the series on a redemption arc of sorts.

Heihachi murdered his wife, we learn in *Tekken* 7, because she carried the Devil Gene, and when it took hold, she had tried to murder Heihachi. He threw Kazuya off the cliff because he had to see if Kazuya, too, carried the demonic gene. His tough-love relationship with Kazuya prior to that discovery stemmed from Heihachi's jealousy and issues with his own father.

The hair? Well, there's no good excuse for the hair.

Heihachi *is* a pretty villainous dude, just not as bad as he first seemed – and certainly not as bad as his devilish son. This inversion of expectations



CHARACTER EVOLUTION











is a testament to *Tekken*'s refusal to be patly predictable, but also stems from Harada's own affinity for the character, who he has claimed on many occasions is his favorite.

"My father grew up in the environment after the war ended, so it was right when Japan was starting to get on its feet, and everyone was starting to live a comfortable life for the first time in a while," Harada recalls. "I had a very normal home environment. But my father and my grandfather were still very Japanese. And the Japanese mentality is that, with men – especially with the first born sons – they're quite strict on them. They push them away intentionally to make them stronger. You challenge them so they can be even bigger and better than their father. So that kind of thinking was very Japanese and my father was no different. So people who are Japanese, especially from my era, see the story portrayed in Tekken, they can kind of relate. It's not like they're trying to kill each other, but it's still that severe environment a lot of times."

In other words, Heihachi is caricature of real cultural tropes and ideas. He might seem cartoony on the surface – and he is – but for Harada, Heihachi is *Tekken*'s personification of wartime Japan.

"I guess you could say he's everyone's image of Japan during [World War II]," Harada says. "The kind of imperialistic Japan, the Zaibatsu – that's the image that's cast onto Heihachi."

Heihachi runs the Mishima Zaibatsu, grown powerful on the sale of military weapons, like a dynasty. In some games he appears in cutscenes













I'LL SQUASH YOU LIKE A BUG!





in a large chair, his own throne. Even the idea that he would hold a tournament for control of his company caricatures what is otherwise a very Japanese idea: only the strongest should be in charge, and those who fail should step aside. Why threaten your own position of power by holding such a tournament? To prove that you deserve it.

Heihachi and the Mishima Zaibatsu are cartoons of World War II Japan: powerful, snarling; purveyors of death and destruction—but also hidden depths, and a decades-long path to redemption.

THE KIND OF IMPERIALISTIC JAPAN, THE ZAIBATSU — THAT'S THE IMAGE THAT'S CAST ONTO HEIHACHI.



SIGNATURE MOVES

ELECTRIC WIND GOD FIST



THUNDER GOD FIST

STONEHEAD

HELL AXLE



RASHOMON

MISHIMA CLAN

JIN KAZAMA

POWER IS EVERYTHING.

The leader of the Mishima Zaibatsu and the man who declared war on the world. Fighting the Devil inside him, which gets stronger everyday, he yearns to be rid of it once and for all. When his battle is over at last, will he find hope... or despair?

THE TRAGIC HERO

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: JAPAN
FIGHTING STYLE: KARATE
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN 3*



WHEN JIN FIRST came on the scene, you would have been forgiven for mistaking him for his father, Kazuya. Father and son shared the same swish of black, anime-inspired hair. The red gloves. Jin even opted for his dad's pants-but-no-shirt look.

And seemingly this is part of the point. The similarities between them help connect the Tekken games together for the casual observer, but their great differences allow the series to remain true to its penchant for taking characters in new and interesting directions.

Beyond the box art, the further links between Jin and Kazuya make for great contrasting examples of nature versus nurture. Both carry the Devil Gene, passed down through generations of their family. Both lost their mothers when they were young. Both possess Mishima blood on their father's side. But Kazuya was raised by an intermittently possessed mother and an abusive father, while Jin was



CHARACTER EVOLUTION



TEKKEN 3



TEKKEN 5



TEKKEN 6







raised on a remote island by his mother, Jun.

Somewhere in that difference — the difference in nurture — Jin became a much different man than his father: a man with a moral compass. Though Jin, too, would be betrayed by Heihachi and caught in the crosshairs of the Devil, those betrayals took place too late for Jin to be corrupted by his anger and desire for vengeance.

In fact, Jin's darkest instinct is a desire to end the destructive Mishima bloodline, and himself along with it.

It's not a coincidence, then, that Jin might be mistaken for Kazuya on the cover of *Tekken 3* (or that he wore the a similar outfit despite never having met his father). He is Kazuya's mirror, a living example of what Kazuya could have been if he had chosen a different path, or grown up under different circumstances.

Jin also served as gift to veterans of the series. What he lacks in the raw power and special abilities of his father and grandfather, he makes up for in quickness, opportune pokes, and quick stance changes. It's a more nuanced approach to Tekken's combat, but the perfect match for the game that relaunched the series for the next 20 years.



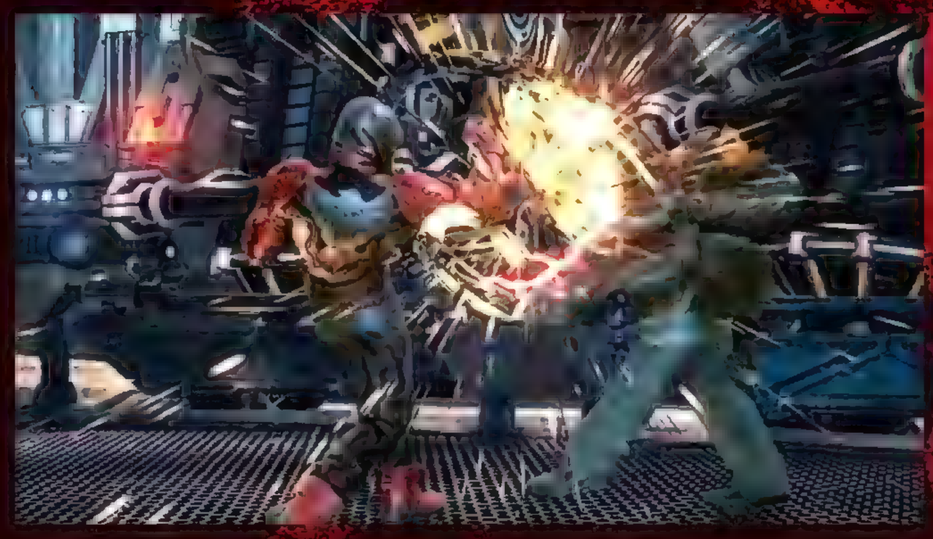
MISHIMA CLAN

DON'T GET IN MY WAY.





SIGNATURE MOVES



SAVAGE SWORD

THRUSTING UPPERCUT

PARRY

ELECTRIC WIND GOD FIST [DEVIL JIN]

LASER CANNON [DEVIL JIN]



SPINNING DEMON [DEVIL JIN]

MISHIMA CLAN

KAZUMI MISHIMA

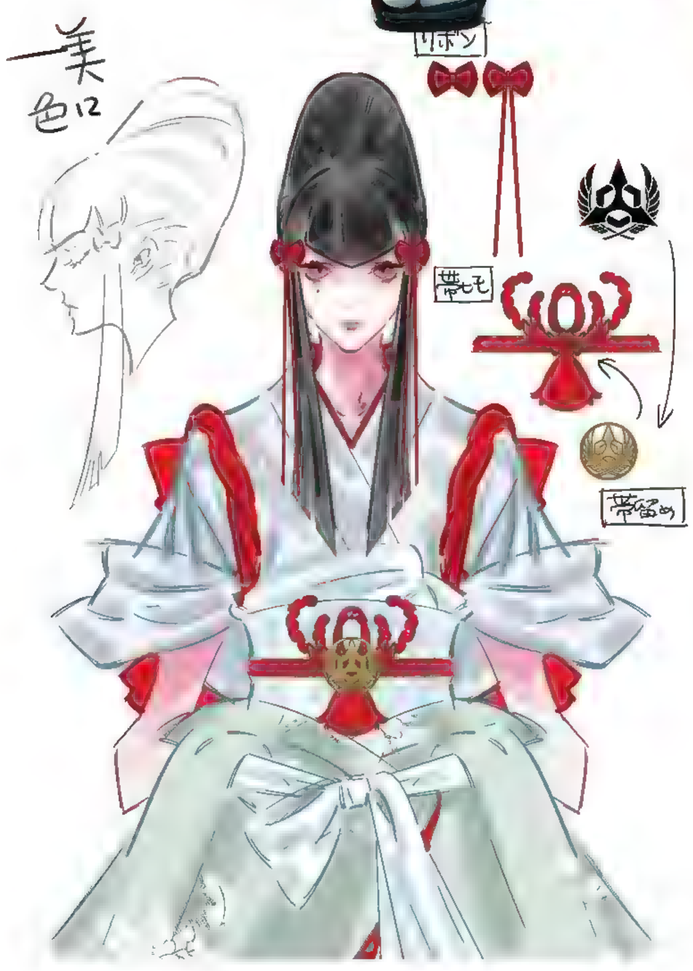


I WILL TEACH YOU THE MEANING OF FEAR.

Kazumi Mishima, wife of Heihachi Mishima, is well versed in Hachijyo Karate. She was childhood friends with her husband Heihachi and eventually they fell in love. Through their love they birthed a healthy young boy. Fast forward a few years later, and Heihachi would become the head of a huge organization called the Mishima Zaibatsu, with plans to conquer the world.

Kazumi loved Heihachi unconditionally, but at the same time he was beginning to feel dangerous. In this state, Heihachi threw the world into a war and Kazumi took it upon herself to stop him.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: JAPAN
FIGHTING STYLE: HACHIJO-STYLE KARATE
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN 7*



IN HER WHITE kimono, geta footwear, and carefully crafted updo, Kazuya's mother and Heihachi's ex-wife is the image of Japanese tradition. She could as easily be from 16th century as the 20th—which is appropriate for a ghost. Kazumi died before the outset of the *Tekken* series, and it took her over twenty years to become a playable character. In the intervening decades, Kazumi has been measure of *Tekken*'s evolving lore.

At first, Kazumi was a symbol of Kazuya's love and Heihachi's cruelty, when in the aftermath of her murder, young Kazuya tried to challenge his battle-hardened father.

Then, she was a symbol of Heihachi's humanity, when we saw their names carved into the floorboards of the temple where the two of them had trained and fallen in love.

Then, she was a mystery. When Heihachi determined that he did not possess the Devil Gene, it began to seem as though Kazumi must have been the source for Kazuya and Jin's hereditary curse.

Ultimately, despite her deceased status, Kazumi became the main series' first female final boss. In *Tekken 7*, her murder at Heihachi's hand was recontextualized as a fight between Heihachi, Kazumi, and the Devil inside her, in which Heihachi had killed her only in self-defense only after she had transformed into her Devil form and attempted to kill him.

In these new flashbacks, it's implied that Kazumi only joined the Mishima clan because she was fated to kill Heihachi. This raises even more questions: How far down her own family tree does the Devil Gene reach? What, if anything, does the Devil Gene have to do with her mission to end the Mishima line?

Whatever changes and revelations lie ahead for *Tekken*, Kazumi is sure to be and its center.

鴻美

全身白装束
(死衣装や花嫁姿がイメージ参考です)

☆死人なので「左前」でお願いできれば幸いです。

☆赤色は濃淡2色あります。

朱色(明るい) → 刀well、頭リボンの七色の方、帯七色、小手七色、裏袖、袖プチリボン。

紅色(濃い) → 着物の裏地、赤襦袢、頭リボンのベースの方。



しぼり布で後ろにリボンでポイント。古風。











SIGNATURE MOVES

DIAMOND TIGER STRIKE
TIGER DEMON'S BREATH



MISHIMA CLAN

LEE CHAOLAN

FIGHTING IS ELEGANCE AT ITS PUREST.

The adopted son of Heihachi Mishima, raised to be a rival for Kazuya Mishima. After abandoning the Zaibatsu for various reasons, he ended up idling his time away in the Bahamas as manager of his own company... until a certain event disturbed his permanent vacation and entwined his fate with the Zaibatsu once again.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: CHINA / JAPAN
FIGHTING STYLE: MARTIAL ARTS
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN*

FOR SOME ORPHANS, adoption might represent a golden ticket: a roof over your head, meals in your belly, and a chance to belong to a family. The reality tends to be a bit more complicated than that, but you'd be hard pressed to get an adoptive family more complicated than the Mishima clan.

On one hand, being pulled off the street by the owner of the Mishima Zaibatsu meant Lee Chaolan would never want for anything material ever again. He would have food, training, an education, fancy outfits; and eventually, a private home in the Bahamas. On the other hand, Heihachi would never be a father to Lee. Not really.

Heihachi had found Lee fighting off a pack of older kids and. He saw potential in the boy – but as a fighter, not a human being. Lee would be a track rabbit for Kazuya, to push him to become a better fighter; and a backup heir in the event that Heihachi ever needed to chuck his biological son off a cliff.

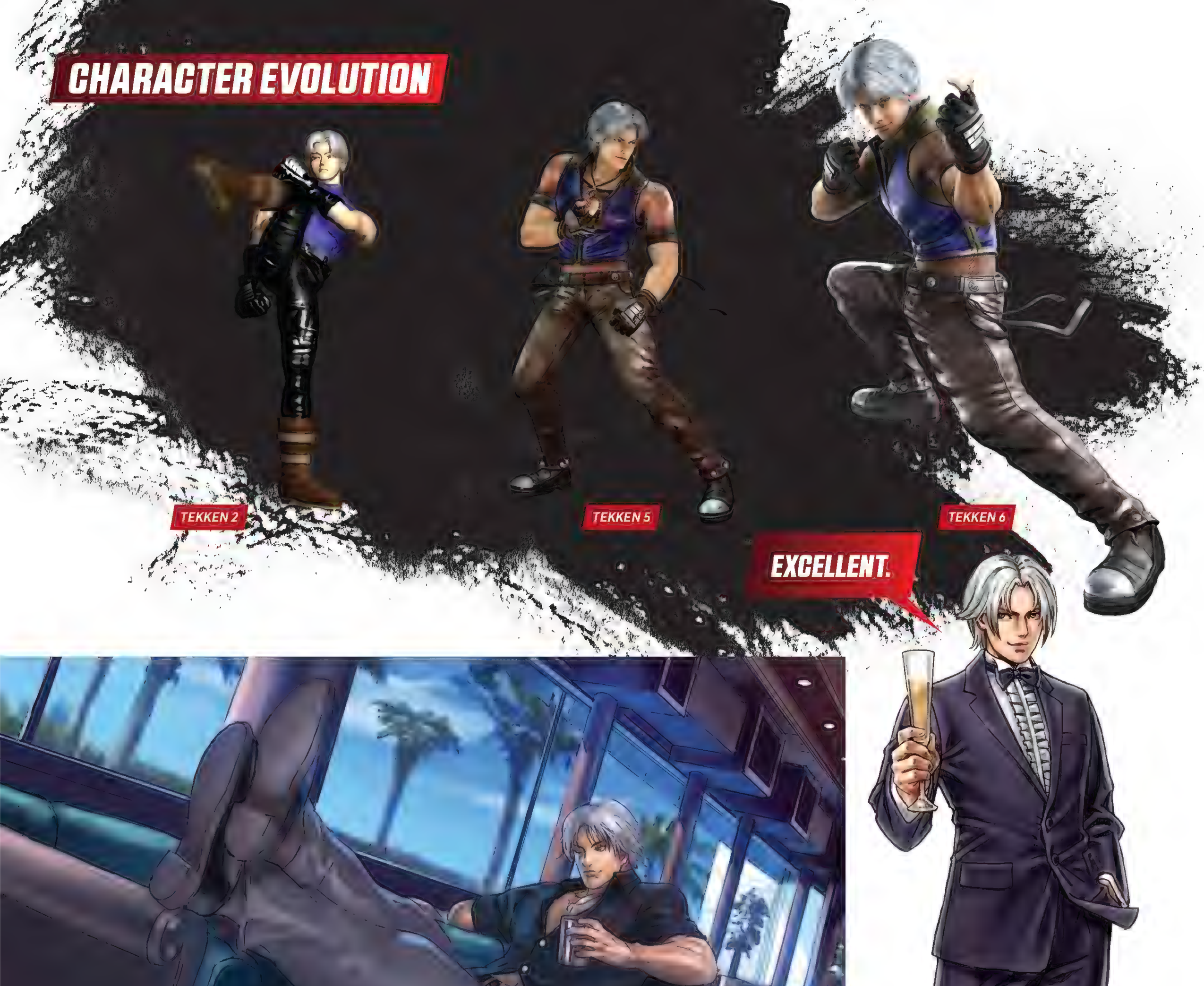
As an adult, Lee tries his best to keep out of the Mishima family drama, but his flamboyant attire and the silver hair he's had since birth– which earned him the ironic nickname "The Silver-Haired Demon"– don't much jive with keeping a low profile.

Though Lee's backstory is also a good lens for his evolution as a *Tekken* character. In the original game, Lee didn't have much of a story. He was a training partner of Paul Phoenix and Marshall Law. Mechanically, Lee was just an unlockable clone of Marshall Law with a few of Phoenix's moves thrown in for good measure.





CHARACTER EVOLUTION

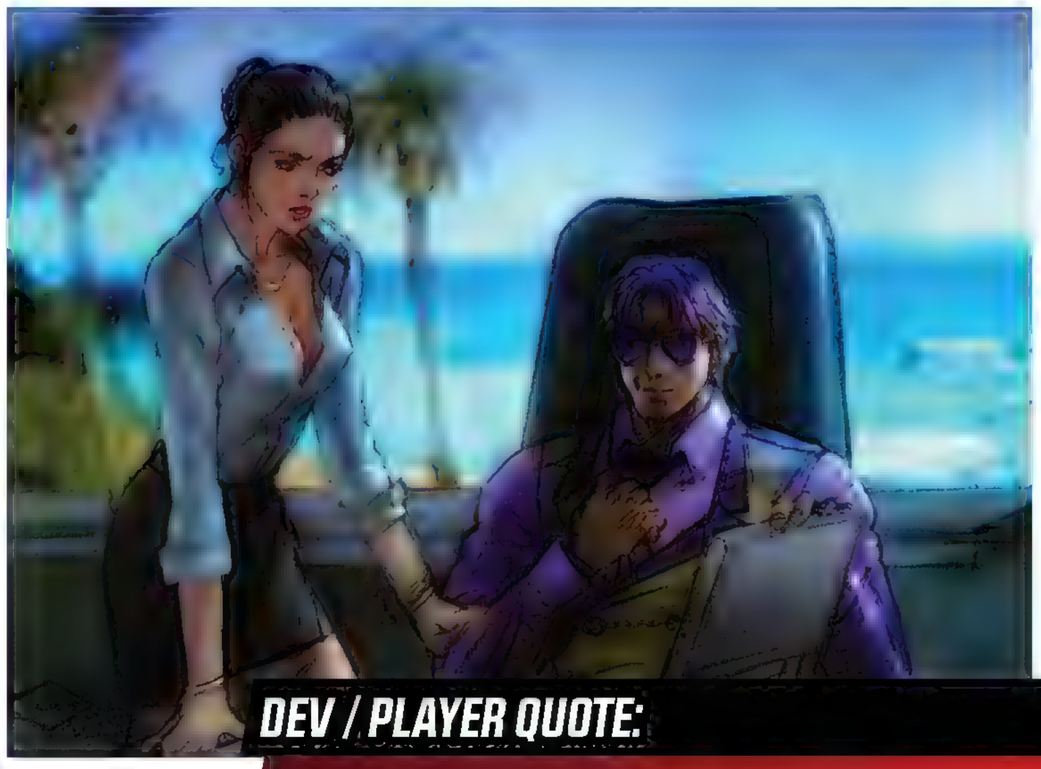


In *Tekken 2*, Lee's backstory was retconned to include the adoption, and he became an integral player in the Kazuya and Heihachi infighting. Since then, he's evolved as a fighter as well: from Marshall Law clone to a man with his own unique style. Lee is evasive, using small pokes to annoy opponents into submission. Maybe he's more of a little brother than he'd like to admit.

VIOLET



WHEN HE'D RATHER not be a Mishima (and who can blame him?) or a Lee (a name to which he has no allegiance), Chaolan hits the scene as his alter ego, Violet. Violet looks and dresses a lot like Lee, only with a lot more purple. Not exactly the disguise you'd expect from someone trying to keep a low profile—but with an upbringing like Lee's, it's no wonder there are a few identity crises to work out.



DEV / PLAYER QUOTE:

"Lee Chaolan. I've been using Lee Chaolan since the 1st *Tekken* console version. I love not only his elegance in his appearance and action, but also his comedian features. I like his profile that after expelled from Mishima family, he managed his own company. And he has a talent in growing the company to global corporation. I like his excellence in both business and battles."

SIGNATURE MOVES

- MACHINE GUN KICKS
- DRAGON SLIDE
- ACID STORM
- SILVER CYCLONE

LARS ALEXANDERSSON



YOU THINK YOU CAN STOP ME?

A former officer of the Mishima Zaibatsu's special military unit, the Tekken Force, Lars enacted a coup d'état and rebelled against his former employer.

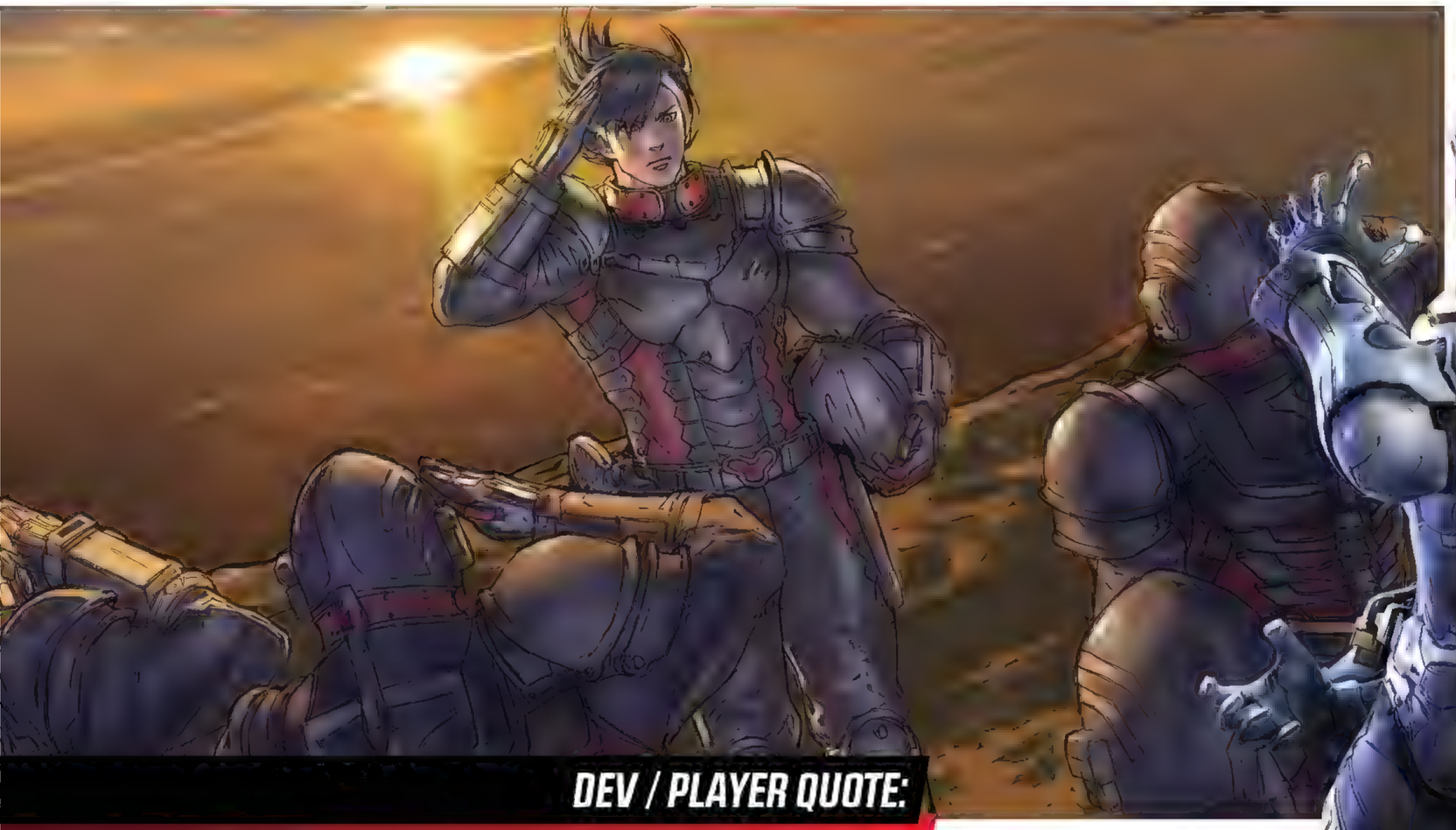
Lars continues to fight despite the loss of his fallen comrades, and his bloody rebellion is nowhere near finished.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: SWEDEN
FIGHTING STYLE: TEKKEN FORCE MARTIAL ARTS
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN 6*

THERE'S A CERTAIN pattern that recurs among descendents of Heihachi Mishima: Burst onto the scene as a would-be protagonist, only to fight long enough to become evil themselves (or, in Jin's case, corrupted by an evil force). Next to try his hand at breaking the cycle is Lars Alexandersson.

Of all the previous series protagonists, Lars seems the least corruptible. He wears his do-gooderness on his sleeve—literally. The armor-clad fighter looks like cross between Thor and Goku, complete with flapping red Superman cape. He does not share Kazuya and Jin's Hachijo blood, so no fear of Devil Genes here. And Heihachi is not yet aware that Lars is his son, which helps keep Lars off Heihachi's radar.

Lars' official fighting style is listed as "Karate" in *Tekken 6*, and "Tekken Forces Martial Arts" thereafter, but bears a strong resemblance to Shorinji Kempo, a holistic spin-off of kung fu developed by Doshin So—who, just like Lars, was a former military intelligence agent.



THERE'S NO WAY YOU CAN STOP ME.

DEV / PLAYER QUOTE:

"We wanted to appeal to the Nordic audiences, because we saw an increase in the popularity of *Tekken* in that area. So we actually went back and forth with the Swedish Embassy in Japan, and they told us a list of names and gave us direction on whether it was realistic or some kind of name that would ever happen. Sometimes you might pick a name from history that would never be used today. So it was a list of names that someone on the street today might have, but not like Jon or Dave or anything as common as that."

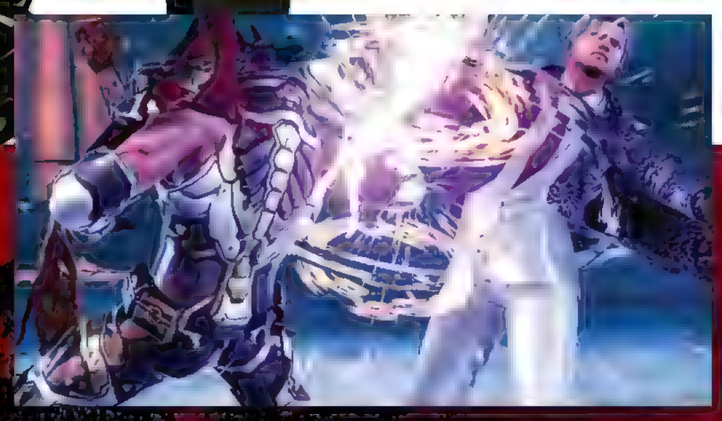
– TEKKEN PROJECT INTERNATIONAL PRODUCER & DESIGNER MICHAEL MURRAY on naming Lars





SIGNATURE MOVES

SHB ZEUS



MISHIMA CLAN

LING XIAOYU

I'M STRONGER THAN I LOOK!

Ling Xiaoyu infiltrated the Mishima Zaibatsu building in search of information relating to Jin Kazama's disappearance. Creeping deeper into the enemy territory under the guards' noses, she eventually heard Heihachi Mishima's voice coming from a room; he was giving orders about locating Jin. Just as Xiaoyu was about to sneak into the room, a man dressed all in white emerged and pushed her back. "Take me to Jin!" Xiaoyu demanded, unflinching. The man stood there for a moment, before ordering Xiaoyu to follow him.

He led her to the roof, then silently turned toward her, and readied himself to fight. Xiaoyu took up her fighting stance, and said, "So that's how it is... If you think I'm just some little girl, you're sadly mistaken."





COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: CHINA
FIGHTING STYLE: BAGUAZHANG AND PIGUAQUAN
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN 3*

"XIAO," AS SHE'S KNOWN by her friends (Xiaoyu is her first name – Ling, her surname), is a character defined by movement. She made her way into the weird, violent world of the Iron Fist Tournament on a lark. During a vacation with her family, Xiao dreamed of one day building the perfect amusement park in mainland China, and had heard of the wealth and power of the Mishima Zaibatsu. With nothing but a dream and a bear, she stowed away on a Mishima Zaibatsu ship en route to Japan.

Heihachi finds his supply ship at port filled with an incapacitated crew. Their diminutive assailant demands that Heihachi build her the world's greatest amusement park. And he agrees – *if* Ling Xiaoyu enters and wins the next Iron Fist Tournament.

In the meantime, Xiao attends Mishima Polytechnic High School, which is an otherwise normal Japanese high school that happens to be owned by a weapons-producing Zaibatsu and



CHARACTER EVOLUTION



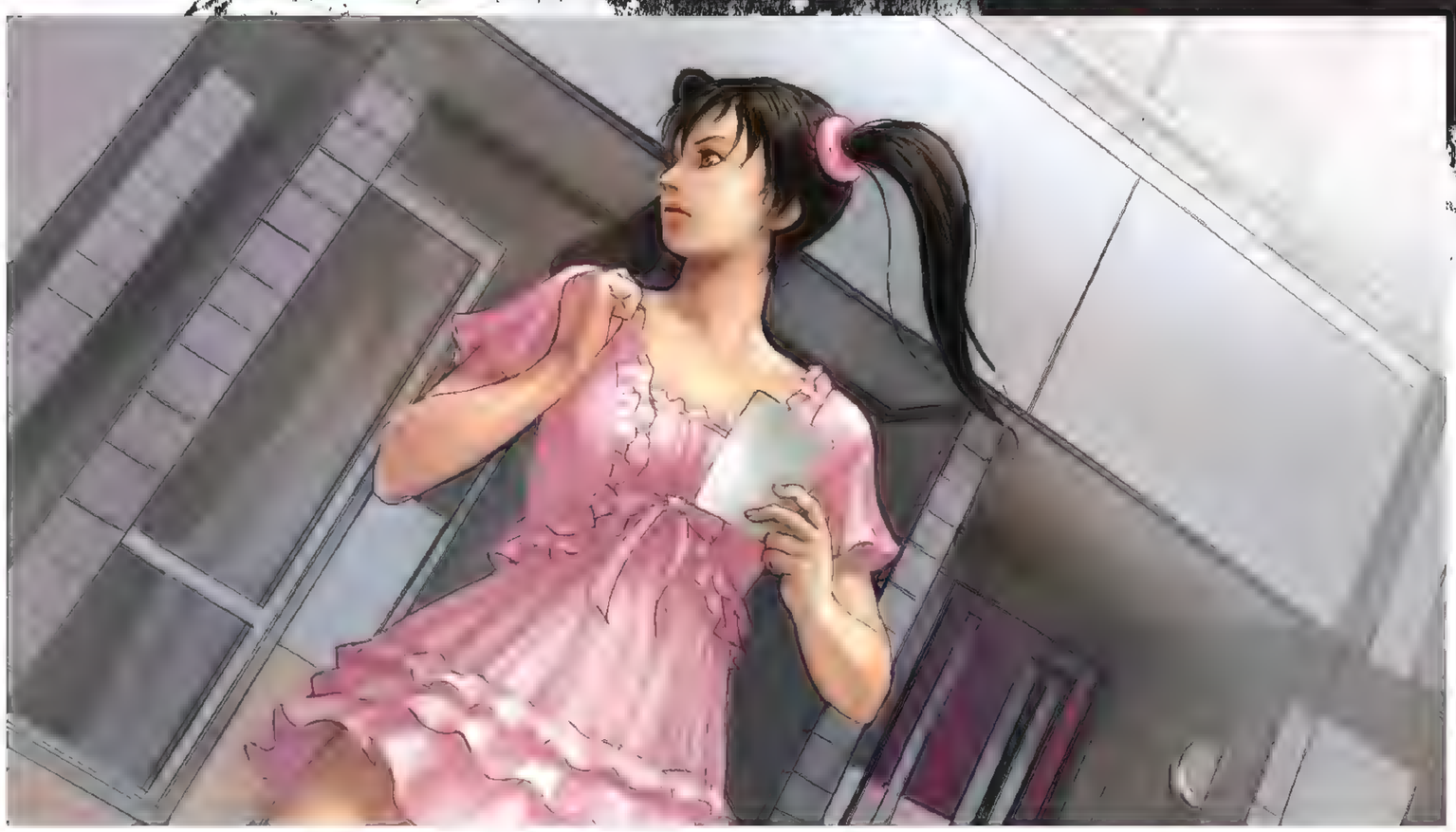
TEKKEN 3



TEKKEN 5



TEKKEN 6











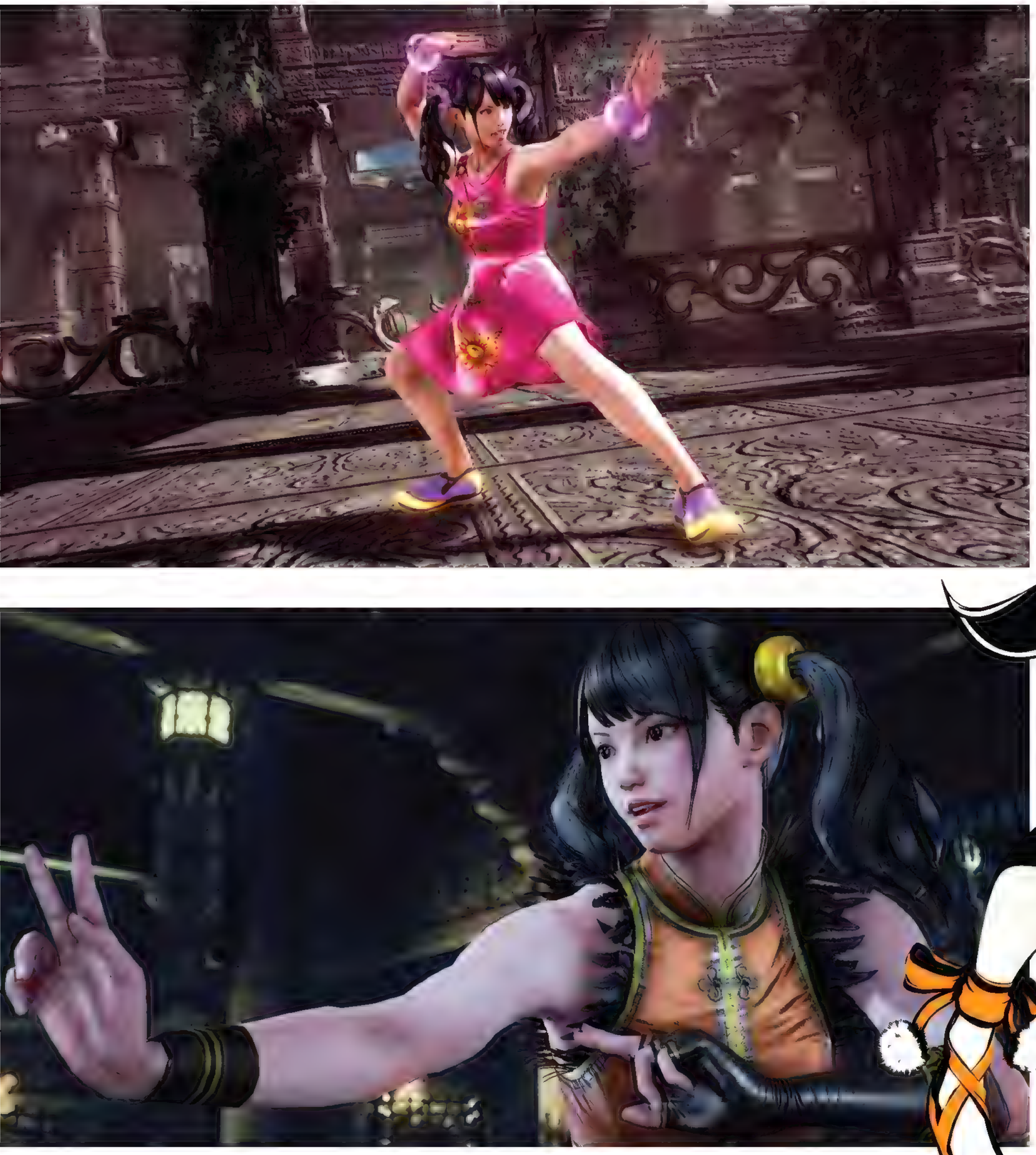




have a giant gold statue of Heihachi Mishima before the entrance. In *Tekken 3*, Xiao attends the school with Jin and her best friend, Miharu Hirano. It's fun to imagine that attending MPHS is like attending Bayside High in *Saved By The Bell*, only Mr. Belding can't stop Jin, Ling, and their racially diverse group of friends from getting up to mischief because any one of them could kick his ass. Or perhaps it's more of a Hogwarts situation, with each class covering an aspect of training or a different martial art.

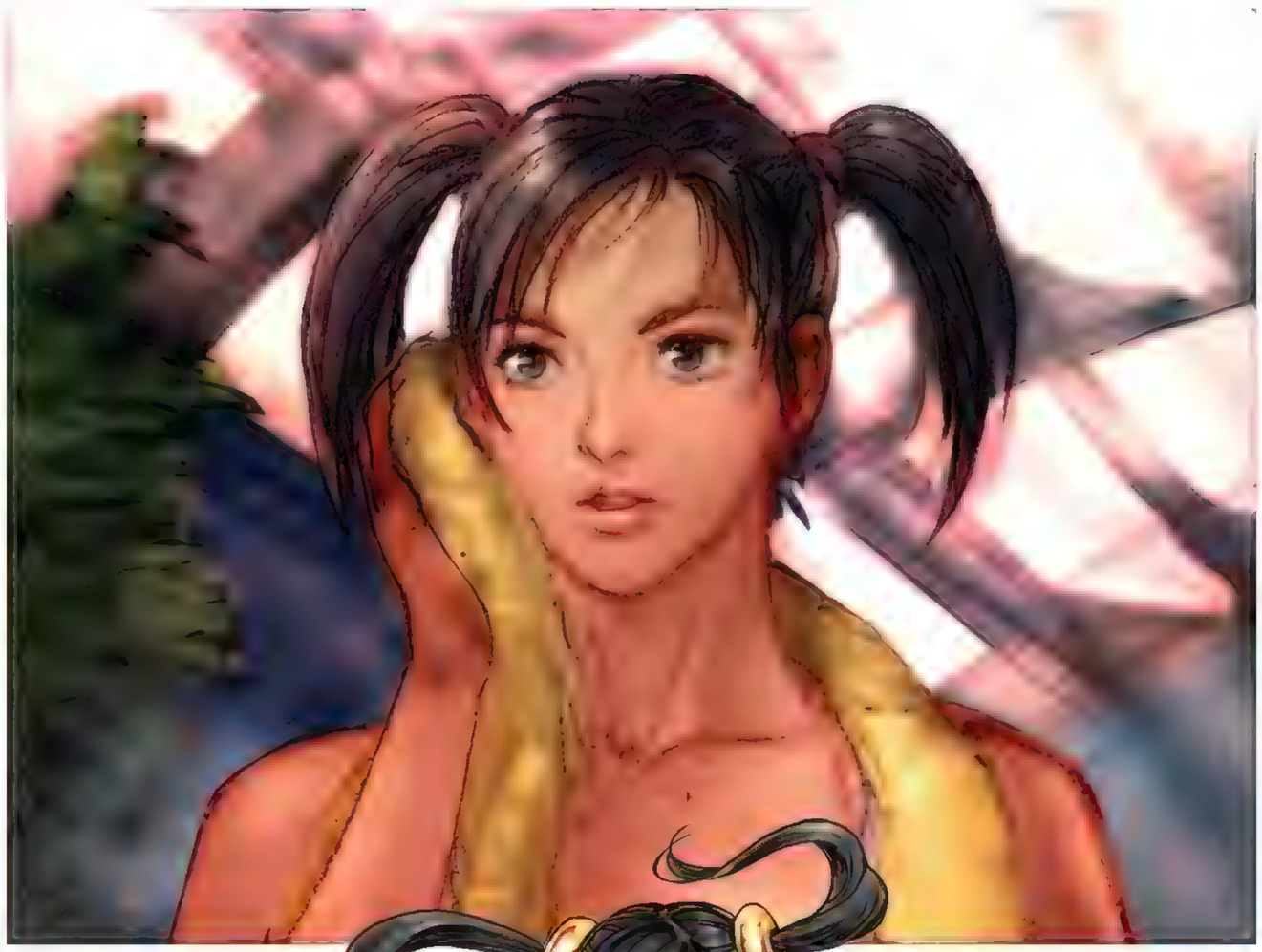
Xiao spends her time in the arena on the move, as well. She employs Baguazhang, a versatile Chinese martial art known for its circular walk. This technique, also called "turning the circle," allows Baguazhang fighters flow through the battlefield, avoiding obstacles and enemy strikes. Xiao also uses Piguaquan, a Chinese technique of palm fighting that emphasizes long-range strikes. This combination means Ling is best kept on the move and striking quickly from a safe distance. She is the proverbial fly of the battlefield, evasive and annoying – and carrying a swatter of her own.

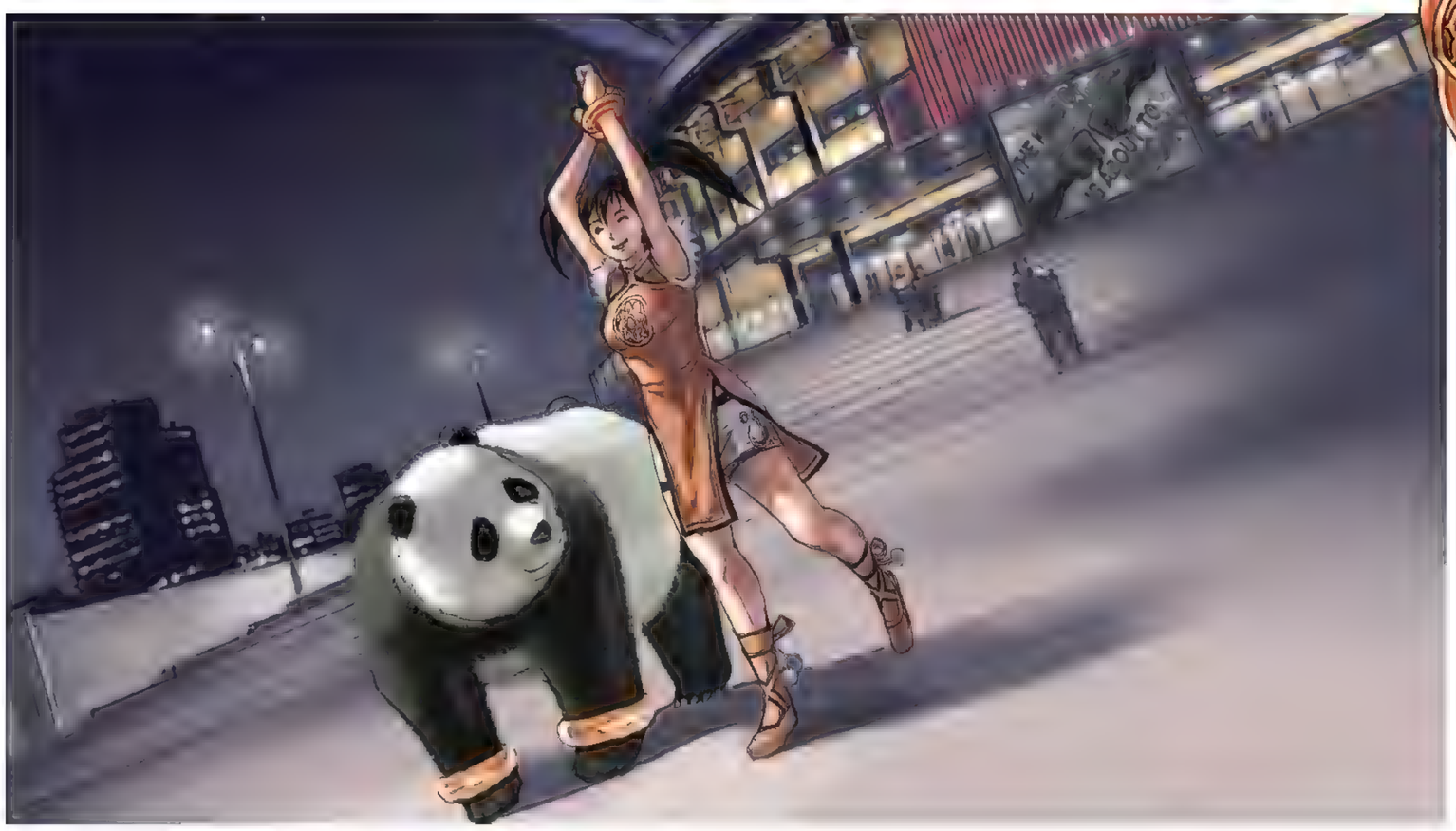
Though Jin stopped attending the school at the end of *Tekken 3*, and Heihachi appeared to die in *Tekken 4*, and Jin technically owned the school in *Tekken 6*, Xiao has carried on, a dutiful, doll-faced teenager through it all. In a related wrinkle, the *Tekken* devs have given Ling the Simpsons treatment. Though she was only 16 when she was introduced in *Tekken 3*, she has barely aged since. Good (Devil-free) genes? Or perhaps it's just difficult to pass











courses when you're leaving school every year to fight in a tournament against robots and men twice your age.

What Xiao's sudden move to Japan means to her family, it's never made clear. Instead, she has become a bit of an honorary Mishima. She has shown feelings for both Jin, her former classmate and training partner, and Heihachi, whom she regards as a an inappropriate uncle. Even though Xiao is still waiting on the amusement park of her dreams, her bond with Heihachi makes sense. After all, what are the odds a young martial arts protege with a pet panda would fall in with a man who just happened to be the world's preeminent expert on teaching bears to fight?



SIGNATURE MOVES

WINGS OF FURY
(TURN OF FORTUNE)



FORTUNE COOKIE

X MARKS THE SPOT

THE PHOENIX
(STANCE)

FALSE SALUTE



STORMING FLOWER



KUMA

THE UNLIKELY BODYGUARD

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: JAPAN
FIGHTING STYLE: KUMA SHINKEN
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN*

KUMA, WHO FIRST appeared in the original Tekken, is the bodyguard of Heihachi Mishima, one of the most powerful and accomplished fighters in Tekken lore. Why does Heihachi need any bodyguard, let alone an unarmed bear standing on its hind legs? Then again, if anyone is going to take on potential attackers Heihachi couldn't defeat himself, it might as well be a ferocious wild animal with paws the size of large pizzas, whose inexplicably advanced intellect caused Mishima scientists to flee from it in confusion and horror.

Kuma's moves are mostly recycled from Jack, but that didn't stop the bear from somehow becoming Paul Phoenix's greatest rival in two straight games. And, let's face it, if you're going to start a rivalry that motivates you to win the Iron Fist Tournament, who are you going to choose? A Russian robot, or a hyper-intelligent bear?

If only Kuma had still been around when Heihachi ran into Akuma, or when he was thrown into an active volcano by his own son.



KUMA II

MR. BEAR, THE SECOND

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: JAPAN
FIGHTING STYLE: KUMA SHINKEN
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN 3*

KUMA II IS somehow even smarter than his already hyper-intelligent father, Kuma I. Maybe it's all the TV he watches. Kuma II was also trained by Heihachi, and took up the mantle as Heihachi's bodyguard after Kuma died of old age.

For those keeping score at home, that's *three different bears* Heihachi has trained to fight. Why bears? How does one even begin to train one bear to perform martial arts, let alone become a leading expert in the field?

Maybe if Kazuya had been born a bear, things would have worked out better.

The Mishima Zaibatsu dispatched Kuma, along with the Tekken Force, to the Philippines on the pretext of helping out with relief efforts after a monstrous typhoon. With the Zaibatsu's financial clout behind them, Kuma and the soldiers visited the stricken areas, gaining the trust of the locals. Before long, local youths, jobless after the disaster, came forward asking to join the Tekken Force. A recruitment test was quickly established and many young hopefuls went to the test location deep in the jungle.

Unbeknownst to them, the final test was a fight against none other than Kuma himself! Some buckled under the pressure and quit, others were eliminated, but in the end one candidate remained: an athletic young woman.

However, the girl took one look at Kuma and burst into tears! Kuma felt bad, but attacked anyway in order to complete his assignment.

PANDA IS NOT only a Kuma reskin, but a Kuma II love interest. Evidently no one told the smart bear about pandas' lackluster reproductive habits (or that they're not actually bears at all). Panda is also Ling Xaioyu's protector; evidently no one told Ling about pandas' napping habits.

Actual zoology notwithstanding, fighting as Panda is fun enough that you might even forget she's an endangered species.

PANDA

BLACK AND WHITE AND RED ALL OVER

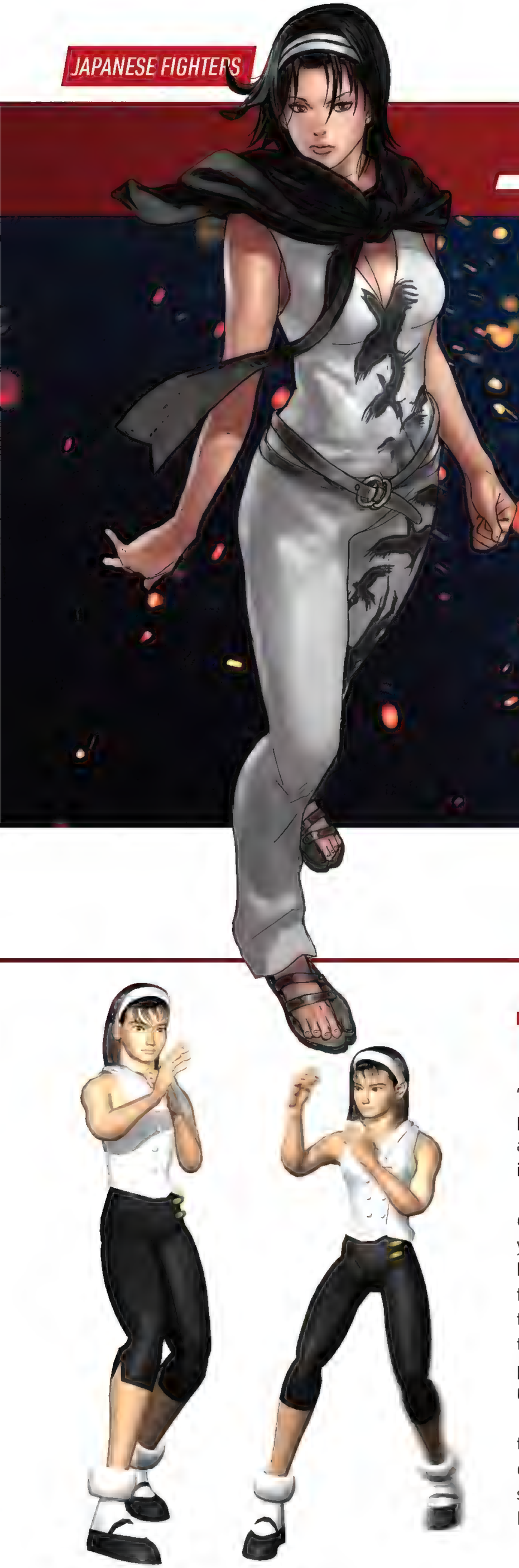
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: CHINA
FIRST APPEARANCE: TEKKEN 3

Panda, Ling Xiaoyu's pet and personal bodyguard, was concerned because she hadn't seen Xiaoyu since she'd left in search of Jin Kazama. Panda deduced that Xiaoyu was likely at a King of Iron Fist Tournament match, so she headed off to the arena.

Panda approached the staff entrance and inquired with the guards as to Xiaoyu's whereabouts, but was hurriedly ushered inside. Believing Xiaoyu to be somewhere up ahead, she bounds down a darkened corridor towards the light ahead...

But to her chagrin, it wasn't Panda's dearest Xiaoyu who awaited her, but an unfamiliar, boorish man with a bizarre hairstyle. Enraged by the man's attitude and absence of her owner, Panda's fury reaches boiling point!

JUN KAZAMA



Mother of Jin Kazama, head of the Mishima Zaibatsu,
Jun is also a master of Kazama Style Traditional Martial Arts.
She searches for something with those sorrowful eyes.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: JAPAN
FIGHTING STYLE: KAZAMA STYLE TRADITIONAL MARTIAL ARTS
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN 2*

THOUGH SHE'S CALLED "The Chosen One" by her own family, Jun Kazama is probably better described as *Tekken*'s "Series Mom." In addition to being series protagonist Jin's literal mom, Jun also stands in as a mythical figure of tranquility and protection in the *Tekken*verse.

In her only series appearance as a fighter, Jun entered the second Iron Fist Tournament as a young conservationist—who also happened to know martial arts—determined to arrest Kazuya for his environmental crimes. See, during his bid to elevate the Mishima Zaibatsu to mustache-twirling levels of evil, Kazuya had became a player in the endangered species black market. Of course he did.

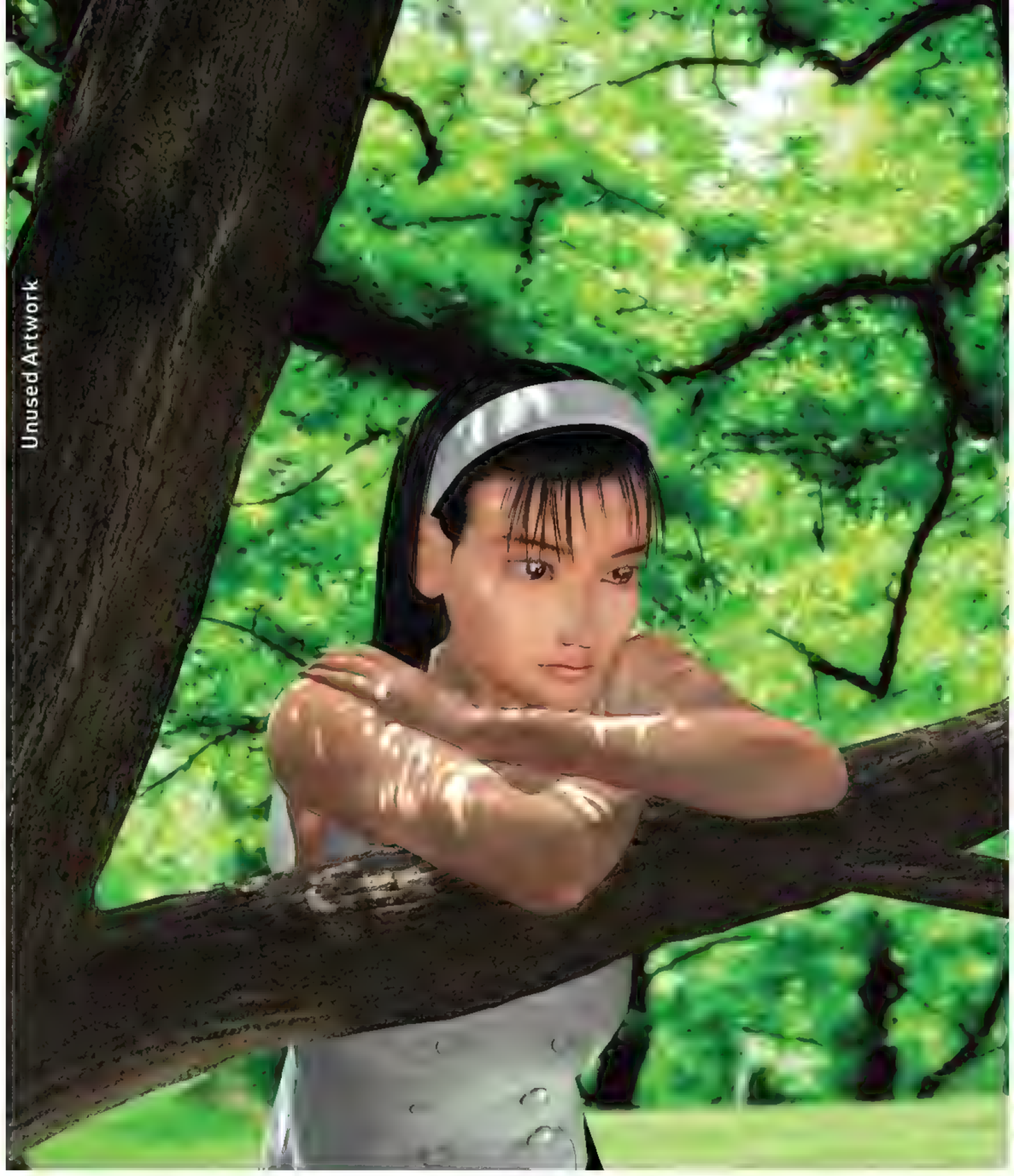
But Jun would end up being a much more than a defender of animal rights. By fate or coincidence, she possessed the power to suppress the Devil Gene growing stronger within Kazuya.

It's a tale as old as time, translated to the world of *Tekken*. The good girl meets the bad boy. She hates him at first, and with good reason. But then she sees there's good in him. And despite herself, she believes she can turn this bad boy good through her own love and understanding. Of course, in *Tekken*, these trope-laden emotional arcs become literal. Kazuya's inner turmoil is a fight between his true self and his Devil self. And Jun's ability to influence him isn't only emotional, but the mystical power to somehow suppress the Devil Gene—to a point.

Not much is known about the nature of Jun and Kazuya's relationship, but it isn't difficult to imagine. Even for Kazuya, who lost his real mother at a young age, Jun served as a maternal figure as well as a lover: someone who sees the young boy he once was, and might have the power to soothe a man who was otherwise a personification of rage and revenge. What *is*















SIGNATURE MOVES

TRIPLE SPIN KICK
WHIPLASH

known is that she ultimately failed – the Devil Gene remains in Kazuya and eventually passed on to their child, Jin.

Being an Iron Fist-caliber warrior never suited Jun's tranquil, maternal corner of *Tekken* lore. When Kazuya was seemingly killed at the end of *Tekken 2*, the Devil left his body in search for another host – and found Jin still in his mother's womb. Jun was able to fight it off, and retreated to the woods to raise her child alone, knowing that one day the Mishima Clan might come for him. That brief respite was cut short when she was seemingly killed by Ogre, creating yet another mirror between Kazuya and his son: both bear the Devil Gene, and both have now lost their mothers at a young age. Is Jin doomed to share Kazuya's fate?

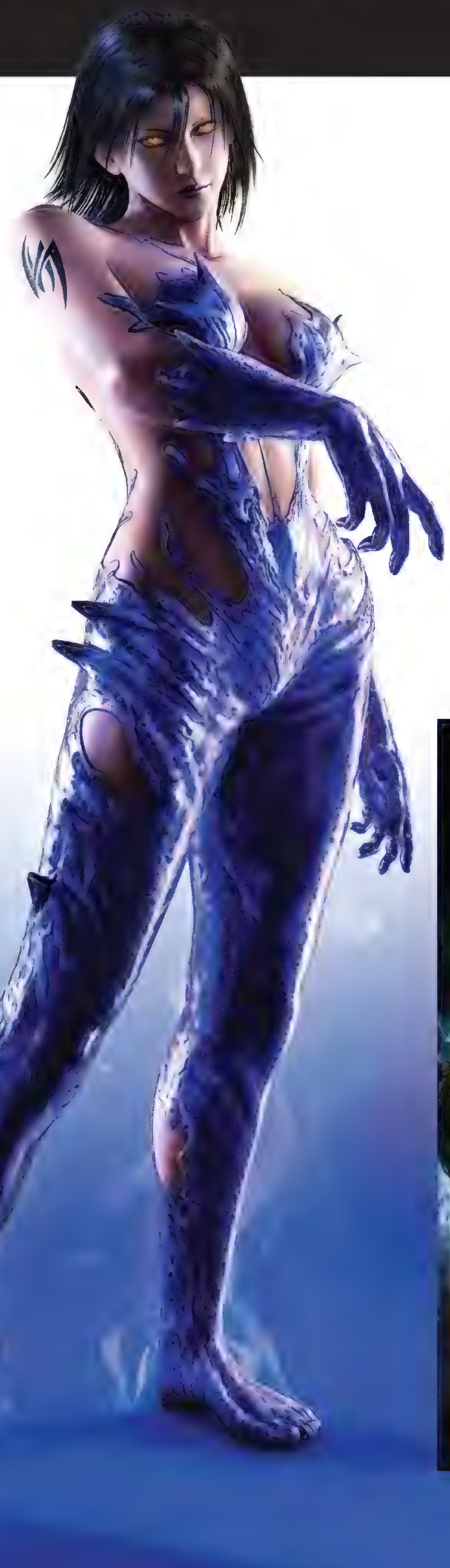
Unfortunately for Jun, her removal from the fighting gallery downgrade her from "Series Mom" to "Motivation." Except, of course, for the parallel universe of *Tekken Tag Tournament*.

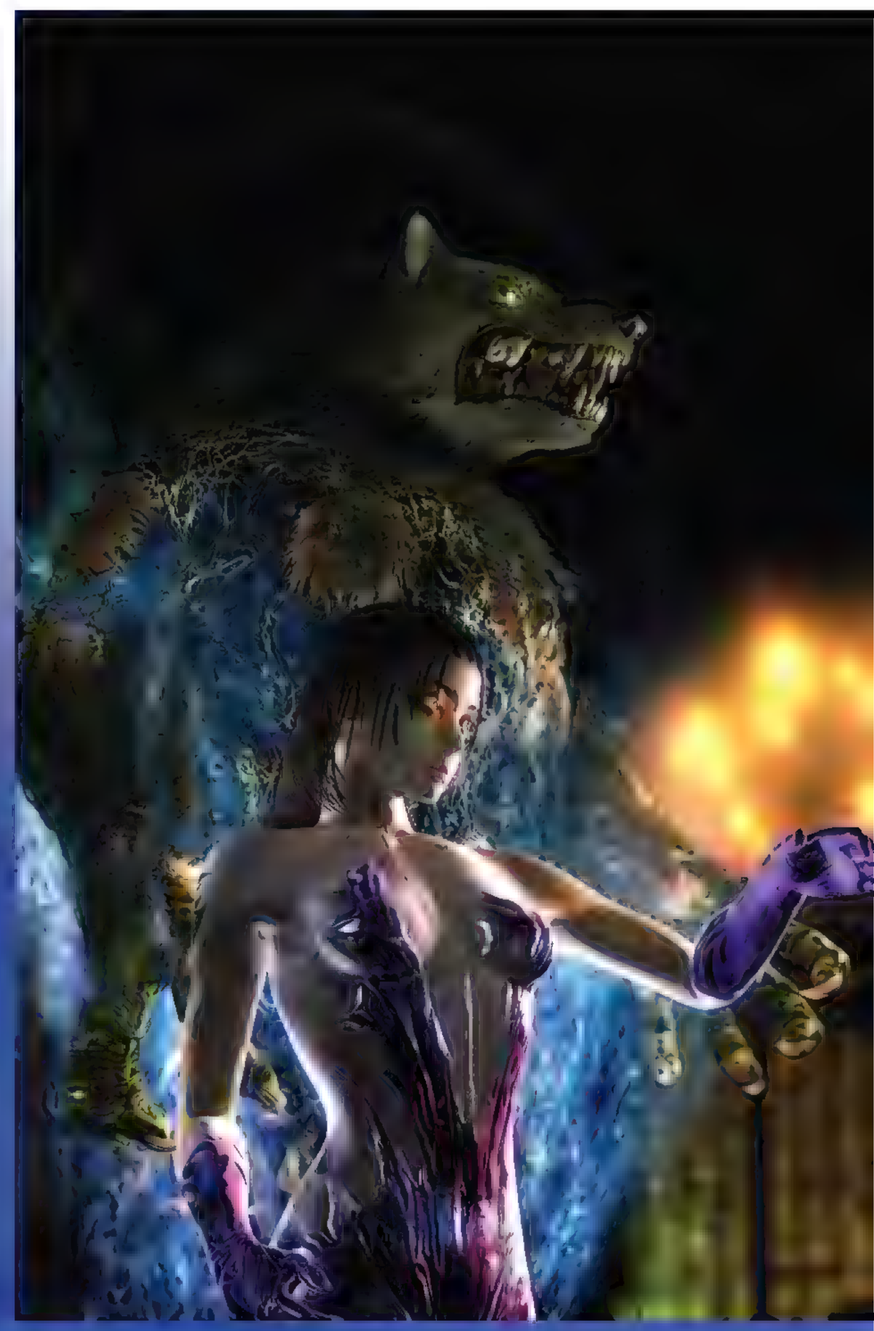
UNKNOWN

THINGS TAKE a weird turn for Jun in *Tekken Tag Tournament*, where she returns not only as a fighter, but as the game's final boss. *Tag* never explicitly states that Unknown is Jun, but there are clues everywhere. They look alike. They fight alike – at least, when Unknown isn't mimicking the movesets of other characters. Unknown even has a tattoo of the Devil Gene on her arm, a possible nod to Kazuya and Jin. The similarities are pretty striking – except for the part that Unknown is an emotionless vessel possessed by some kind of evil wolf spirit. Is that what really happened to Jun? Is she alive after all?

Players who beat the game as Ogre, defeating Jin as the final boss, are treated to an additional glimpse of Unknown in the ending. Ogre bears down, ready to consume Jin's soul, when Unknown steps in and stops him, saving Jin from a gruesome fate. Saving Jun's son while taking revenge on the creature who killed her? Sounds like something Jun would do.

But technically, the *Tag* games aren't canon. So Jun's true fate, and her relationship to the wolf spirit remain... Unknown.





ASUKA KAZAMA

WHEN YOU RESORT TO FIGHTING, EVERYONE LOSES.

Daughter of the Kazama Traditional Martial Arts School and known as "Gang Mediator" in her hometown. Ever since she involved herself in a certain street fight, Lili has viewed her as a rival. She knows that Jin Kazama is her cousin and vows to take him down.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: JAPAN
FIGHTING STYLE: KAZAMA STYLE TRADITIONAL MARTIAL ARTS
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN 5*



IN THE TIME JUMP between *Tekken 2* and *Tekken 3*, most of the old guard were replaced or augmented by a young counterpart. An apprentice, a daughter, a former rival. Despite her untimely demise, Jun Kazama would have to wait until *Tekken 5* for her heir.

Brash and eager to jump headlong into battle, Asuka doesn't share much with the tranquil Jun when it comes to personality. But she and Jun fight in the same "Kazama Style," and they evidently share a last name. And both Asuka and her father, the enigmatic "Mr. Kazama," share Jun's surname.

The women of the Kazama clan have one more thing in common: the ability to suppress the Devil Gene. When Jin was nearly overcome by the Devil in *Tekken* 5, Asuka's mere touch saved him—resulting in only a partial hideous possession deformity and all but confirming Asuka's Kazama blood.

Mechanically, Asuka is one of the best defensive characters in *Tekken*, excelling in evasions and reversals. A defender of the innocent and protector of the self-immolating men of the Mishima Clan? Asuka might not know much about the legacy she's inherited, but the arrival of Jun's heir apparent was worth the wait.







SIGNATURE MOVES

DEMON SLAYER
INNER STRENGTH
ATTACK REVERSAL
SACRED BLADE



KUNIMITSU

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: JAPAN
FIGHTING STYLE: MANJI NINJUTSU
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN*

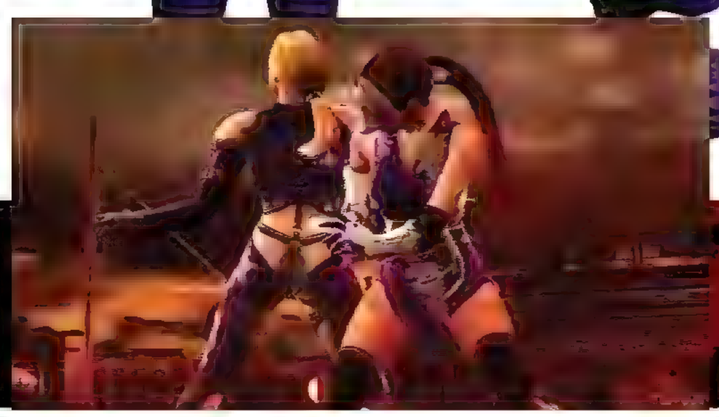
A female ninja who was once a member of the Manji Clan of chivalrous thieves. After acting on her own selfish desires, she was excommunicated by the Manji Clan leader Yoshimitsu. No one knows her true identity hidden behind that fox mask.

IN THE ORIGINAL *TEKKEN*, Kunimitsu was often mistaken for a male fighter. She's even listed as male in the English manual. That misunderstanding was due in part to the blocky nature of the PlayStation graphics, but also to the vocal styvs of Katsuhiro Harada, whose voice acting for Yoshimitsu was also used unaltered for Kunimitsu.

Kunimitsu's voice and appearance were updated in *Tekken 2*, but her fate didn't much improve. Once a member of Yoshimitsu's Manji Clan, Kunimitsu was kicked out for commiting thefts that didn't meet the clan's Robin-Hood ethos of not stealing for personal gain. Only later would she learn the true power of Yoshimitsu's sword—at which point she would, well, attempt to steal it for personal gain.

Despite wielding a dagger in each hand, Kunimitsu doesn't appear to use them in combat. Perhaps if she had, she could have gone on to fight in more than two Iron Fist Tournaments.





SIGNATURE MOVE

KUNAI MURDER

GANRYU

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: JAPAN
FIGHTING STYLE: SUMO
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN*

"A sumo wrestler who has gained fame for being the youngest ozeki in history. He runs the "Chanko Paradise" restaurant chain, but has struggled getting it off the ground. He has made clear his feelings for Michelle and Julia, but they both have already spurned him.

THOUGH SUMO WRESTLING is a sensation in Japan, Ganryu is one of the least popular fighters in *Tekken*, according to Harada. Still, in a game series dedicated to replicating and interpreting real-life martial arts, the game would be incomplete without a rikishi.

Before the *Tekken* cast grew to encompass the world, most of the characters and fighting styles were centered in Japan. Ganryu himself began as a Jack clone – a large fighter with a sumo skin and top knot – his appearance and fighting style were further distinguished in *Tekken 2*.

Ganryu is a a world-class wrestler with a dishonorable streak. Banned from sumo after making illegal bets on his matches, he then turned his attentions to a bigger prize: the Iron Fist Tournament. Despite losing his first Iron Fist Tournament, Ganryu was brought into the Zaibatsu by Kazuya as a bodyguard.

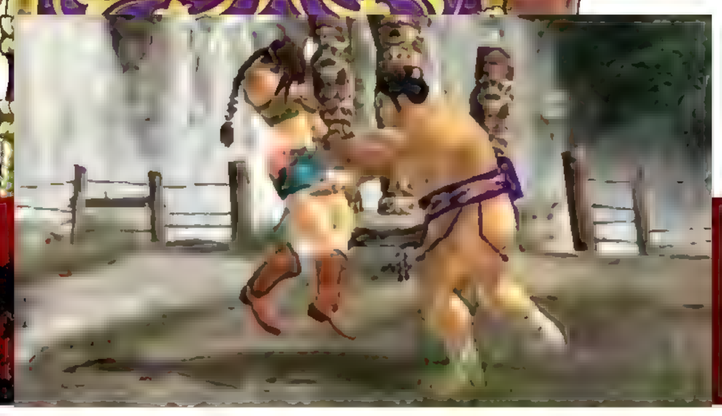
But there's one thing that can temper this imposing wrestler's temper: love. Though his infatuation with Michelle Chang (and then her daughter, Julia) remained unrequited, it was enough to move him away from a life of crime. Eventually, Ganryu retired to Hawaii, where he became a humble sumo stable owner.





SIGNATURE MOVE

JULIA HUG
(ONLY AGAINST JULIA)



MOKUJIN / TETSUJIN

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: JAPAN
FIGHTING STYLE: MIMICRY
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN 3*



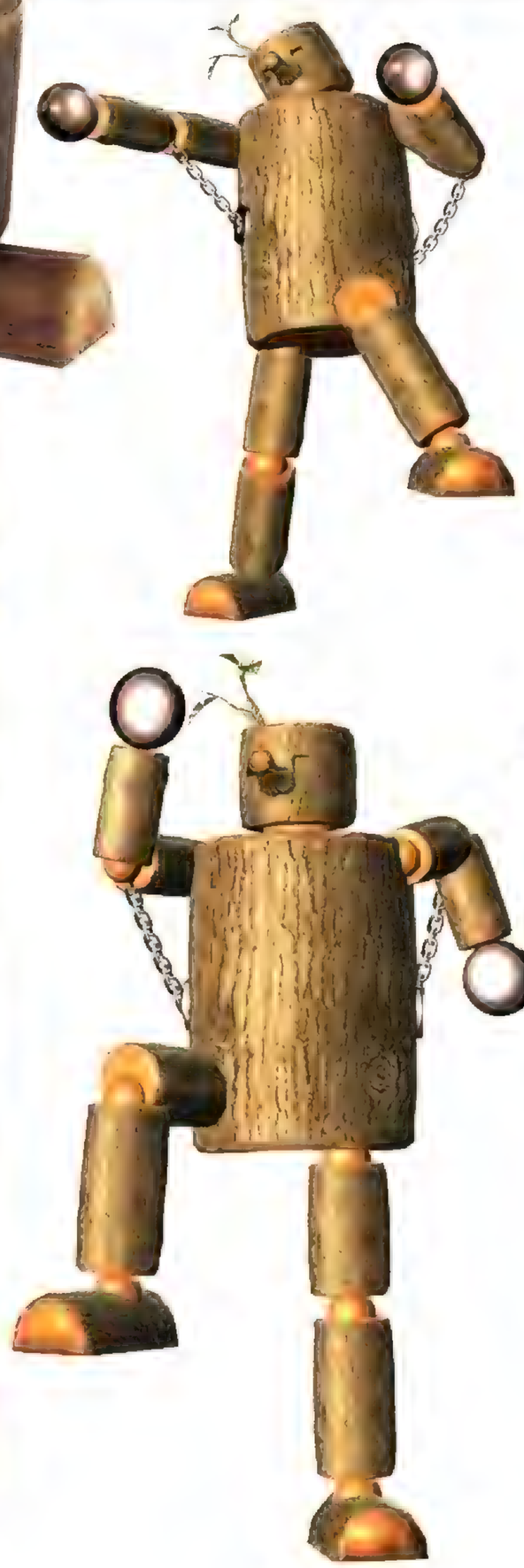
An effigy made for training, carved from an oak tree that has existed since ancient times. Usually he is but an immobile doll, but can move of his own volition in emergency situations."



WOODEN PRACTICE DOLLS are as old as fighting itself – but Mokujin is no dummy. The 2,000-year-old white oak training doll had been on display in a museum until Ogre, the God of Fighting, arose, causing Mokujin to awaken, too. Think of him as a combat-ready Pinocchio–sans soul.

Mokujin (literally "wooden person") fights by mimicking a different tournament fighter in each round. It makes him unpredictable – but, ironically, he represents a great way to practice against *Tekken*'s vast array of fighters.

The next time you're at the dojo training, just imagine your training dummy hitting back. Then maybe stick to video games.





TETSUJIN: Literally "metal person," he's Mokujin cast in metal.

COMBOT

ORIGIN: VIOLET SYSTEMS
FIGHTING STYLE: MIMICRY
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN 4*

"A multipurpose humanoid robot created by Violet Systems. He was completed at some point, but due to unavoidable complications, he has had to be rebuilt. Thanks to his adaptable memory system, he is able to perform various fighting styles."

THIS ROBOT FIGHTER is the creation of Violet, Lee Chaolan's alter ego. Combot was *supposed* to be able to incorporate any fighter's moves and learn from every defeat, making it the ideal candidate to take down Heihachi and hand control of the Zaibatsu to Combot's operator. But in his rush to complete Combot before the fifth Iron Fist Tournament, Violet left some kinks to work out. As a result, Combot can only replicate one fighter's moves per match.

For *Tekken* players, Combot's limits are a feature, not a bug. Combot can be used to hone your skills against any fighter—and should you face it in the tournament, there's no telling what you'll be up against.

Still, Combot's ability to change movesets once every match instead of once every round is a downgrade from Mokujin. In this case, at least, it seems that magic bests technology.





PAUL PHOENIX

I'LL SHOW YOU THE POWER OF THE STRONGEST IN THE UNIVERSE... BUT NOT FOR FREE!

When Paul Phoenix, the golden boy of the martial arts world, steps into the ring, the excitement in the crowd is palpable. But this time when his opponent's name rang over the arena's loudspeakers, he could only scratch his head in disbelief. It was Kuma... again!

However, Kuma was nowhere to be seen. Word went round that the bear had dropped out of the tournament. The ring announcer informed the spectators of a last-minute change to the fight card. Relieved, Paul awaits the entrance of his long-anticipated human opponent...

HAIR WILL RISE AGAIN

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: UNITED STATES
FIGHTING STYLE: INTEGRATED MARTIAL ARTS BASED ON JUDO
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN*

PAUL STARTED OUT as the would-be rival to *Tekken*'s would-be protagonist, Kazuya Mishima; the Ken to Kazuya's Ryu, down to his blonde hair and tattered red gi. But another detail – Paul's foot-tall high-fade flat top hairdo – was an early indicator that he wouldn't be anything so mundane.

Like Kazuya, Paul has consistently refused to be penned in by his trope-laden beginnings. He is a relentless trainer, cocksure and confident (and let's face it – you pretty much have to be, to sport that 'do), whose sole focus is to prove himself as the best fighter in the world. Some seven Iron Fist Tournaments later, he's still working toward that goal.

Paul's rivalry with Kazuya begins and ends in the ring. In the first *Tekken*, Kazuya was the only fighter in the world to ever fight Paul to a draw, much less defeat him. Unfortunately, Kazuya already had a rival: his father. As for all the rest of the Mishima family drama – the bloodlines and the Devil Genes and the Zaibatsus – Paul couldn't be bothered.

It was not unexpected, then, that while Kazuya and Heihachi escalated their family dysfunction into an all-out international war, Paul cultivated a new rivalry. Less expected? That his new archrival would turn out to be a hyper-intelligent bear.

Eat your heart out, Ken Masters.

As a fighter, Paul Phoenix has developed a reputation as a great character for beginners, with a straight-forward move set that dishes out heavy damage: big, powerful punches and judo-inspired throws. Paul's move list isn't limited to judo, though – he incorporates a mix of karate and jiu jitsu for good measure.





CHARACTER EVOLUTION







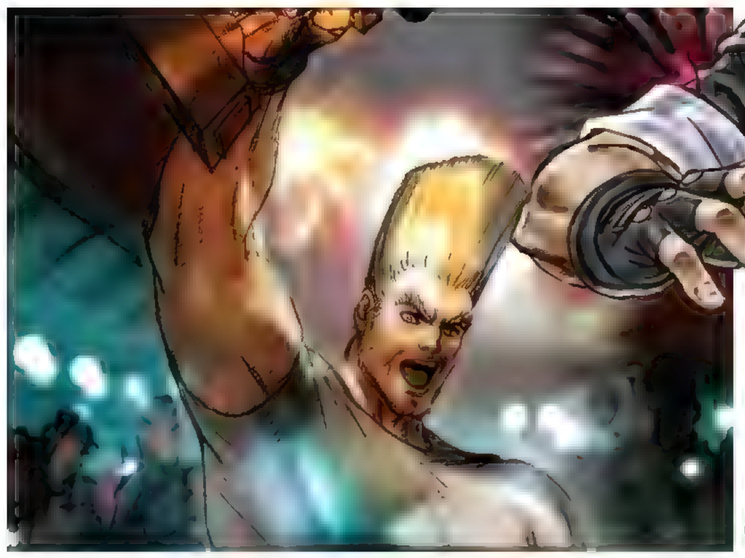


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NOTHING LIKE A GOOD WORKOUT.

PAUL PHOENIX

WEIGHT A MINUTE





PAUL PHOENIX is listed at 6'1⅝". It really is that specific. But he's also listed at 81 kg, or about 179 pounds. This is exceedingly light for a man of Mr. Phoenix's musculature. For reference, NBA All-Star Stephen Curry is listed at 6'3", 190 pounds, and he's considered scrawny by NBA standards. For a moment, let's give the game the benefit of the doubt and assume that Paul's height of 6'1⅝" includes his incredible stovepipe of blonde hair. That would make his *actual* height about a foot shorter, and lend an explanation for why a walking human deltoid like Paul is so light. Then again, it would also make everyone else in *Tekken* really short. Let's just go with Occam's Scale here: Paul Phoenix? You lied about your weight on your tournament entry form, sir.



DEV / PLAYER QUOTE:

"It's so exhilarating when succeed in a counter attack or a clean hit by "Phoenix Smasher". The enemy's hit point will be extremely reduced, and cannot feel this exhilaration by other games."

– NAKABAYASHI



SIGNATURE MOVES

PHOENIX SMASHER



DEMOLITION MAN

ULTIMATE PUNISHMENT



HAMMER PUNCH

PHOENIX BONE BREAKER

MARSHALL LAW



COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: UNITED STATES
FIGHTING STYLE: MARTIAL ARTS
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN*

RUNNING A DOJO will never be a cash cow, even for a world-renowned fighter like Marshall Law. That's why Law's dojo – located in the heart of San Francisco's Chinatown – is a family affair. Law's best friend, Paul Phoenix, helps keep things running, and before his motorcycle accident in Tekken 5, Marshall's son, Forest, hopes to follow in his father's footsteps.

For the sixth Iron Fist Tournament, Phoenix proposes that he and Law enter as a team along with Steve Fox. It's a good plan. With rents skyrocketing in American's tech company capitol, one of the aging fighters is going to have to win the tournament sooner or later or else they risk seeing their beloved dojo turned into a coffee shop.

Preoccupied with paying off his son's debts, Marshall Law didn't realize how many of his students had quit his dojo until it was almost too late. With a large sum still to repay, Law was running out of ideas. As a last resort, he decided to search for a capable fighter to run the dojo.

He asked his friend Paul if he knew anyone, and in his usual manner, Paul said he himself would be the perfect candidate. However, thinking that the dojo would go bust in half a day if Paul took control, Law politely refused.

Instead, he put the word out that if any strong fighters wanted to try out for the job, they should come and prove their skills in combat. Challenger after challenger appeared, but none of them were good enough for Law.

Then, one day, Law heard a rumor that a martial artist living in rural China was set to be the next God Fist master. Seeing this as his best chance yet, Law set off for his ancestral homeland.



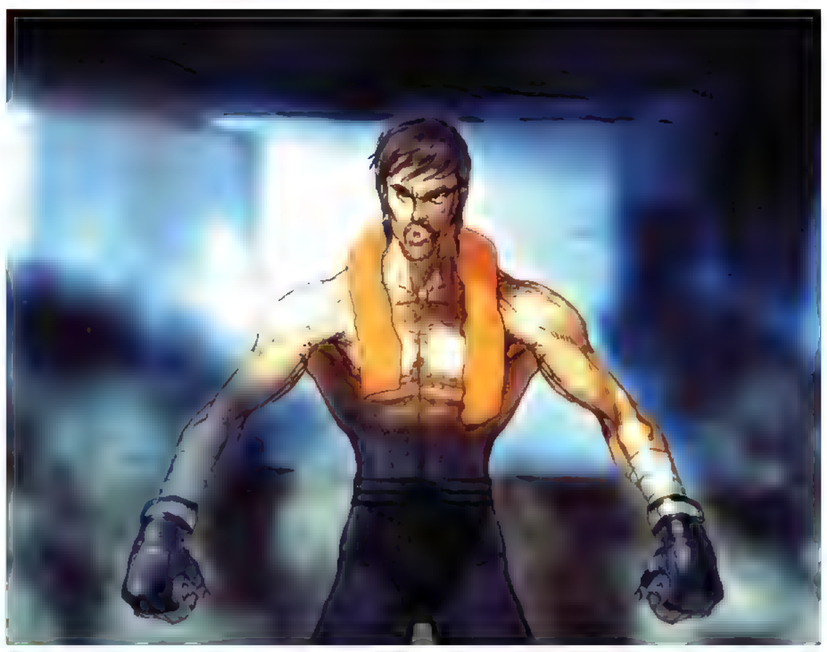


CHARACTER EVOLUTION









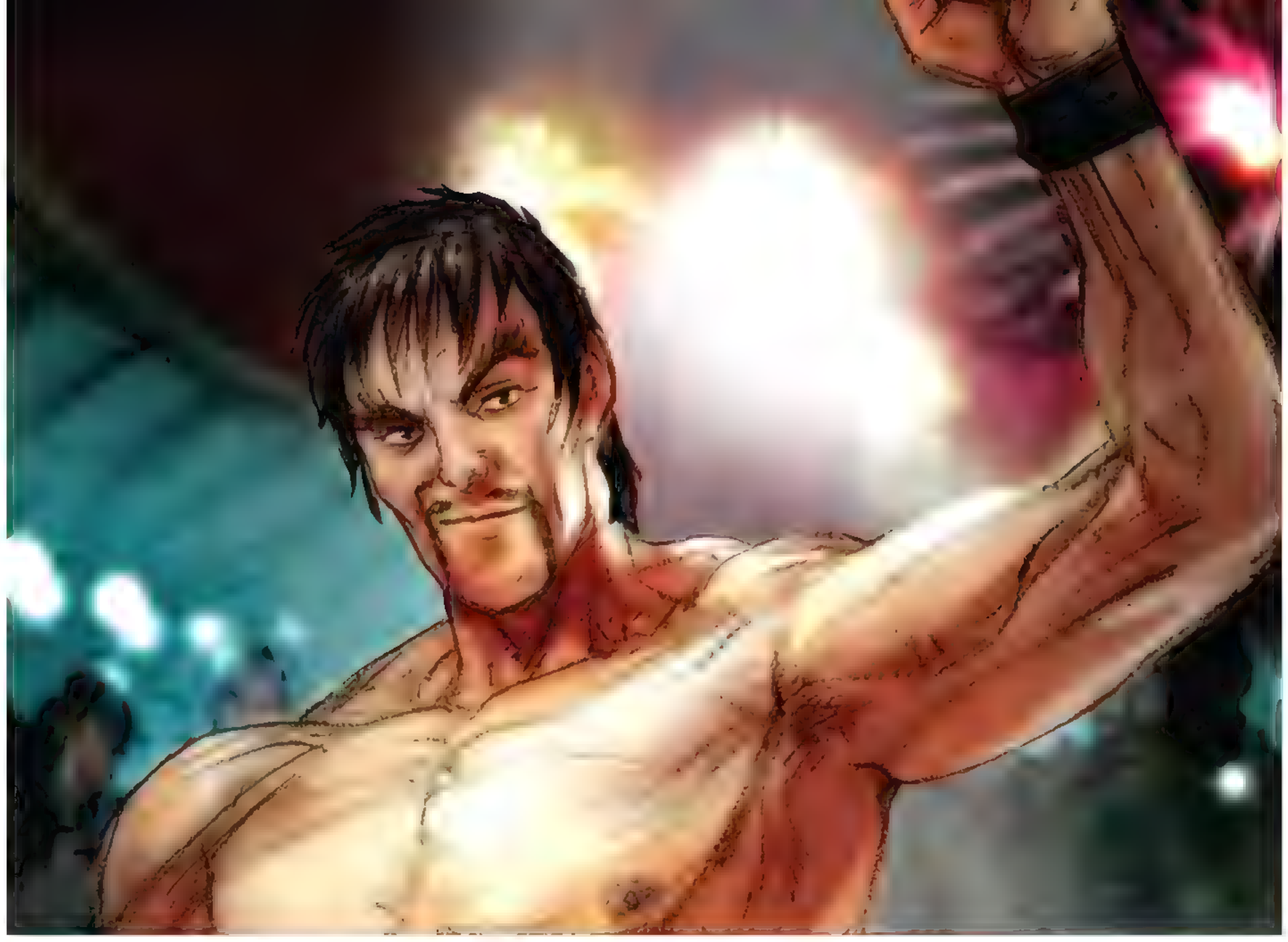




AMERICAN FIGHTERS

COME AND GET SOME! I DARE YOU!













SIGNATURE MOVES

SOMERSAULT KICK



DRAGON'S FLIGHT

DRAGON CANNON



MACHINE GUN ARROW

FAKE STEP

FOREST LAW

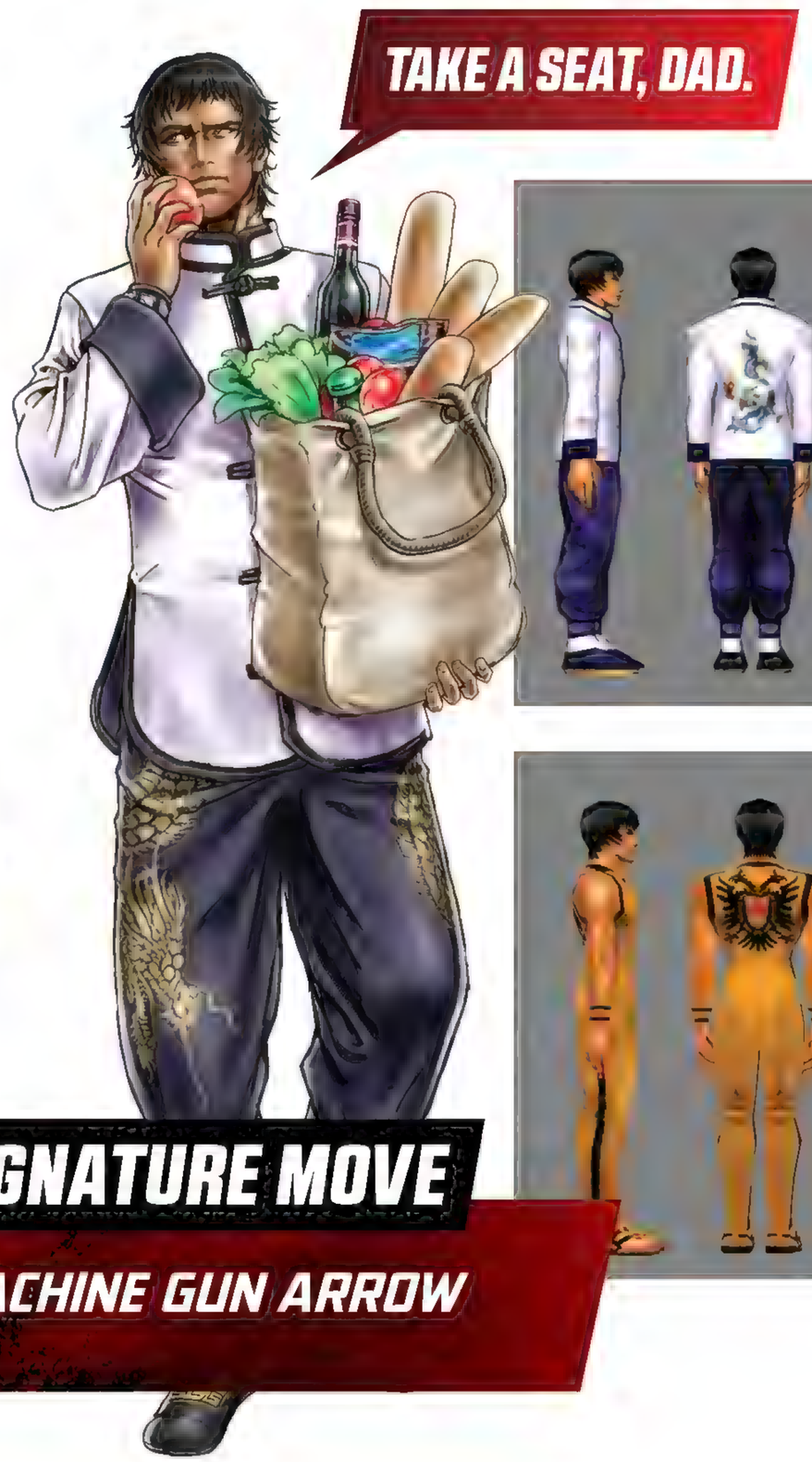
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: UNITED STATES
FIGHTING STYLE: MARTIAL ARTS
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN 3*



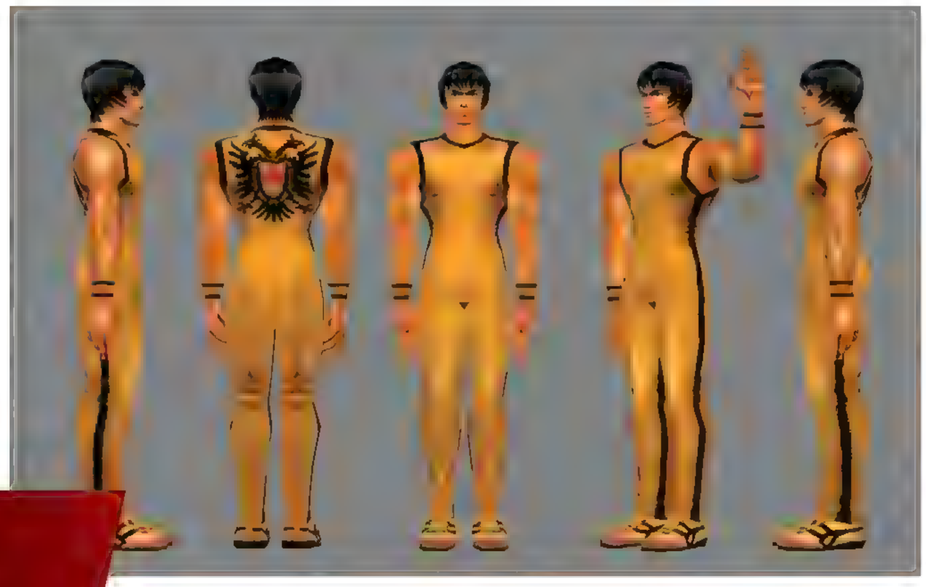
OF ALL THE YOUNG newcomers stepping in for their elders in *Tekken 3*, Forest is the one who didn't stick. It's not all Forest's fault, though. For starters, his dad didn't even have the sense to continue family tradition and give him a pun for a name.

In Forest's defense, trying to get out from his father's shadow was his motivation for entering the third Iron Fist Tournament in the first place. But since then, he's only appeared in the *Tag Tournament* games, and his biggest accomplishment in the main series was causing a massive traffic accident in *Tekken 5*, motivating his father to enter the tournament to pay the resulting bills.

It seems that, at least in this case, *Tekken* players can't see the Forest for the Lees.









SIGNATURE MOVE

MACHINE GUN ARROW

BRUCE IRVIN

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: UNITED STATES
FIGHTING STYLE: KICKBOXING
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN 2*

IN A WAY, Bruce was ahead of his time. A Muay Thai fighter with a mohawk from the mean streets of Anywhere, USA was a fine choice for mid-'90s *Tekken*. 20 years later – when UFC kickboxing was en vogue, and mohawks were cool again – Bruce might have been less distinctive.

In *Tekken* 2, Bruce stood out for being the first playable Black character in a series without very many of them. To this day, he has only been joined by Eddy Gordo and Master Raven as major and recognizably Black playable fighters.

Bruce disappeared from *Tekken 3* and *4* due to a bad case of amnesia (his, not the developers') before rejoining the fray in *Tekken 5*.



SIGNATURE MOVE

OTEE SAWK KAO

ROBERT RICHARDS



SPEED AND WEIGHT!

Once a fighter who had won the hearts of fans with his excellent sensibility and handsome good looks, he decided to transform himself completely by gaining weight to eliminate the perceived disadvantage he had in a fight due to his body type. His fans were disappointed, as on the outside it looked like he'd merely put on a few too many pounds, but Bob was definitely pleased with himself.

A SIZABLE OPPONENT

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FIGHTING STYLE: FREESTYLE KARATE
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN 6*



IN A GAME full of fit women and ripped dudes, Bob stands out as a hulking, overweight, blonde-haired American in a Hawaiian shirt. At a glance, he seems like someone you'd see scarfing hot dogs and $12 beers in the crowd at the Iron Fist Tournament, not competing for the crown.

In fact when Bob first came on the scene, he created some controversy amongst the *Tekken* community – but not because of his weight.

You see, before the introduction of an actual Bob, *Tekken* players had taken to calling another character, Hwoarang, "Bob."

Longtime series designer Michael Murray takes the blame for this. "They already had the sketch of what he looked like. And when I looked at it I thought, "This guy is definitely a Bob.""

As the only American on the team, Mike makes it a point to help Harada and the rest of the team pick out distinct but realistic names for the game's American characters. It's a difficult needle to thread.

"So [players] gave me some crap later," Mike says. We were already calling *him* Bob, why did you make a new Bob?"

But the plus-size bounty hunter from the South has made a name for himself. There's nothing quite like witnessing a man of his size gracefully execute karate combos. Bob's weight isn't a flaw, it's a feature. As he moved up the ranks of his sport, he found he could not defeat larger fighters. And so he employed an unorthodox training regimine and returned to the sport able to outmatch his opponents in girth as well as grace.

In Bob's *Tekken 6* ending, he is so caught up in his fame that he inadvertently loses his trademark weight. "Slim Bob" – also a playable version of the character – is the perfect example of *Tekken*'s sense of humor.







SIGNATURE MOVES

BARISTA SWIRL
COMBINATION MINCE

STEVE FOX



HEY YOU... YOU WANNA TRY ME?

Steve Fox has had plenty of run-ins with the Mishima Zaibatsu, but he never gave up his search for information about his past. Though his mother's identity remained a mystery, one name in particular began to crop up time and again: Nina Williams.

Believing she knew something, Steve began investigating her whereabouts until he came up with a promising lead. The information led him to an imposing cathedral. As he considered how best to proceed, a figure appeared from inside, dressed in a tattered wedding gown.

It was Nina, who seemed to be running away from something. Steve told her to stop, but she ignored him and fled. Determined not to let this opportunity escape him, he blocked her path.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: UNITED KINGDOM
FIGHTING STYLE: BOXING
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN 4*



WITH THE FLASHY fighting styles and supernatural powers flying around in *Tekken*, the idea of boxing seems almost quaint. Even in the real world, traditional boxing has become a holdover of a bygone generation, overtaken in popularity by the likes of mixed martial arts and the UFC. Yet being a boxer is what makes Steve Fox one of the most distinctive fighters in all of *Tekken*.

Steve's move list contains almost no kicks, although one move has Steve stomp on his opponent's toes. Instead, Steve plays like a – well, like a video-game boxer gone turbo. His relentless punches and creative combos can be a formidable force... if a player can adjust to life without kicksweeps.

Fox is a world champion boxer with a mysterious past. His appetite for the ring is rivaled only by his desire to discover the identity of his birth parents. Eventually, Steve learns he was created in a Mishima Zaibatsu laboratory as part of an experiment to create biological super soldiers. He was the only subject to survive.

Steve's mother, it turns out, is Nina Williams, whose eggs were taken from her against her will vwhile she was frozen in cryosleep. While Nina may not harbor much in the way of maternal instinct toward Steve – understandable, given his origin – discovering that he's her son did once prevent her from assassinating him on a paid hit. Ah, motherly love! So far, the identity of Steve's father remains a mystery.

Though his past may be a bit dodgy, Steve has done well for himself. He was a world champion in his sport even before entering the Iron Fist Tournament. He's earned the sizable purses and comfortable life that comes from international boxing fame. And he's one of the few *Tekken* characters who manages to make more friends than enemies as the series goes along – friends like Lei Wulong, Marshall Law, and Paul Phoenix.

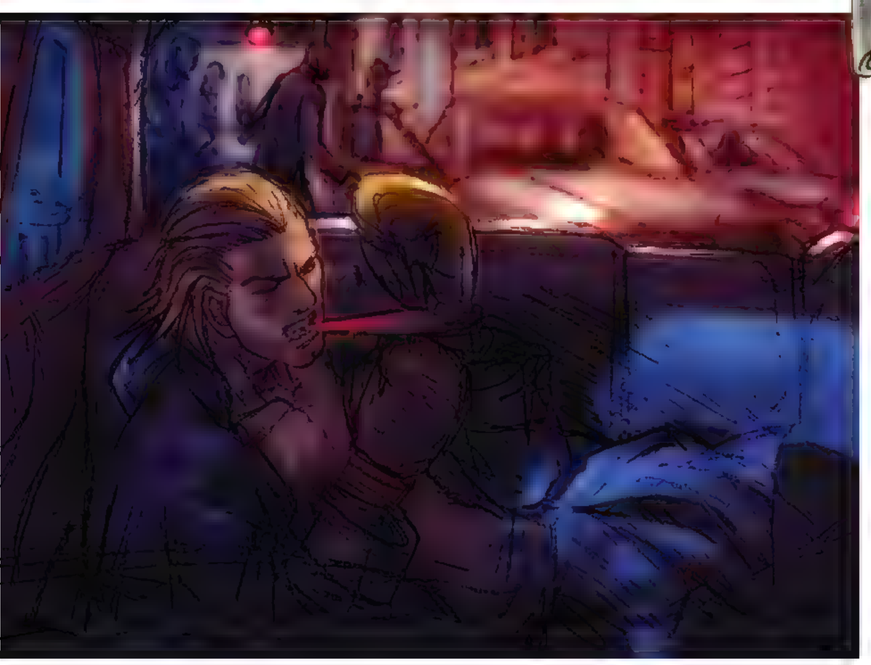

Steve Fox

He likely has *Tekken* Project's own Michael Murray to thank for that.

According to Murray, Harada originally wanted to name Steve "Dean Earwicker." This name even made it out in preview materials, much to the chagrin of fans. Thankfully, Murray stepped in and offered up a more suitable Western name. Orphaned super soldier or not, if he had been named Dean Earwicker, you can bet your boxing money Steve's outlook on life wouldn't have been so cheery.













STEVE FOX

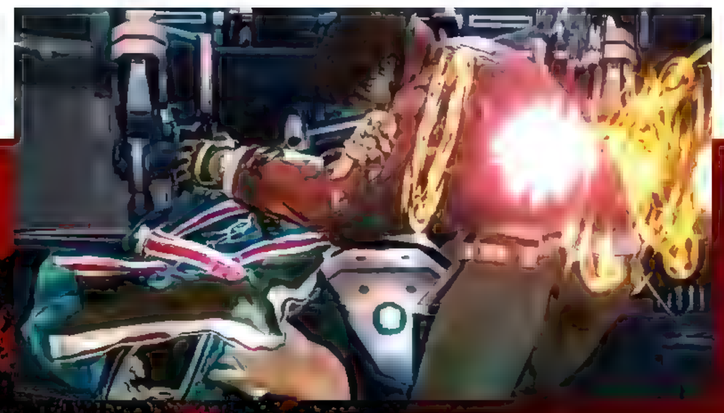


SIGNATURE MOVES

BRITISH EDGE COMBO

HELLFIRE

DEMPSEY ROLL



HWOARANG

COME AT ME! I'LL TAKE YOU DOWN!

Hwoarang sees one man as his rival: Jin Kazama. Jin, CEO of the Mishima Zaibatsu, declared war against the world, and in the ensuing turmoil vanished suddenly, without a trace. Suspecting there is more to Jin's disappearance than meets the eye, Hwoarang vowed to track him down.

With only a shred of reliable information at hand, he headed to the Middle East. After a series of dead leads, Hwoarang heard word that a demon had appeared in a town. Without a second thought, he got on his motorcycle and hammered down there.

When he arrived, the place had been deserted, save for Jin Kazama in his devil form.







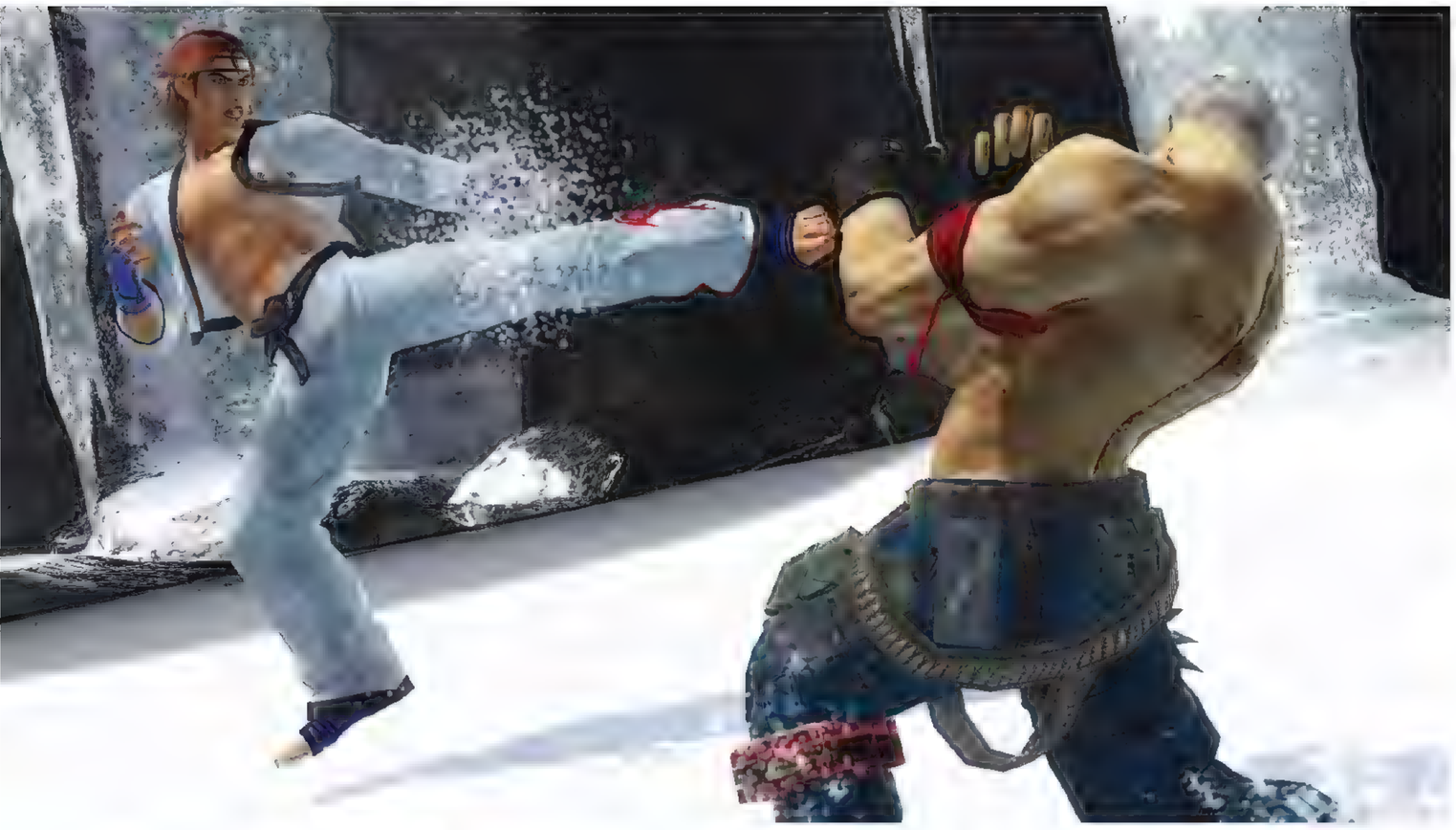
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: SOUTH KOREA
FIGHTING STYLE: TAEKWONDO
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN 3*

THE HOT-HEADED APPRENTICE of Baek Doo San took up the mantle of the Iron Fist Tournament's taekwondo representative in *Tekken 3*. But when Hwoarang (that's *Hwah-rang*) arrived... Western players didn't really know how to say his name.

So, they called him Bob.

Some claim that Bob is in fact a permutation of his Hwoarang's canonical nickname, Blood Talon. Others say it derives from concept art that was released before *Tekken* 3 – and before Hwoarang had a name – featuring him on his signature motorcycle. With only the hog to go by, players allegedly dubbed him "Boy on Bike," or "Bob."

To capture the unique physicality of bike boy's taekwondo fighting style, *Tekken* producers went to the source. During the development of *Tekken 3*, they used motion capture on Hwang Su-Il, a renowned International Taekwondo Federation champion.



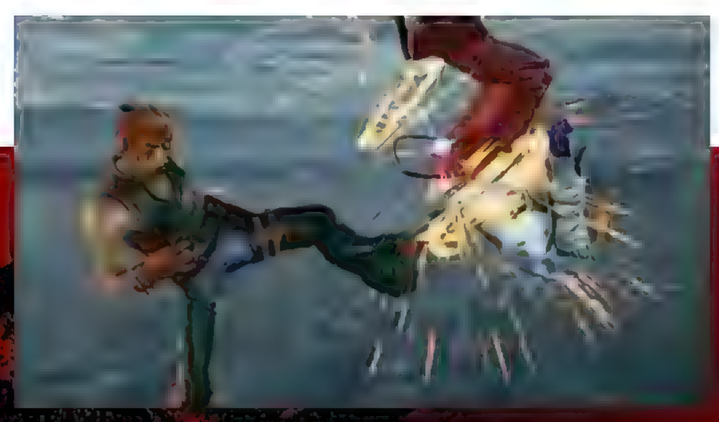






SIGNATURE MOVES

SKY ROCKET
HUNTING HAWK



BAEK DOO SAN

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: SOUTH KOREA
FIGHTING STYLE: TAEKWONDO
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN*

AT THE BORDER of North Korea and China stands the highest mountain on the Korean Peninsula, known to North Koreans as Paektu-san – or, to South Koreans, as Baekdu-san.

The mountain is revered in Northeast China and both Koreas, but was not always a site of tranquility. In 946 AD, the mountain was an active volcano and the site of one of the most violent eruptions in recorded history. Likewise, Baek Doo San is an otherwise calm character with an eruption in his past: After accidentally killing his own father in a sparring match, Baek Doo San went on a violent rampage, attacking and demolishing other dojos, including Marshall Law's.

These days, Doo-San is known more for being Hwoarang's taekwondo master. But even his aging fits his meaning-packed name: In both Hangul and Japanese kanji, Baek Doo San's written name translates literally as "white head mountain."

The hits keep coming.



SIGNATURE MOVE

HUNTING HAWK

EMILIE "LILI" DE ROCHEFORT

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: MONACO
FIGHTING STYLE: SELF-TAUGHT
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN 5: DARK RESURRECTION*

IF LILI LOOKS like the kind of trust-fund socialite you'd expect to see at an exclusive cocktail party at the Cannes Film Festival, that's because she is. Lili's father is a wealthy oil magnate from the Mediterranean island of Monaco. But while her friends were all planning their Bat Mitzvahs and sweet sixteens, Lili was kidnapped for ransom. In captivity, something awakened inside of her, and she fought violently to free herself. She's been addicted to fighting ever since.

Her father hates violence of any kind, even while so much of it surrounds his business enterprises. His overprotective nature has only pushed his daughter further into the ring.

Though Lili's fighting style is listed as "self taught," she appears to use a combination of gymnastics and graceful dance moves to keep her opponents at bay. She lacks the strength and training of many of her opponents, but makes up for it with impressive range and relentlessness.

YOU SURELY DON'T BELIEVE... YOU CAN BEAT ME?

Lili entered the King of Iron Fist Tournament again without telling her father this time either. There she was anyway, smiling as the rapturous crowd looked on and her opponent entered the arena. Lili was set to fight Asuka Kazama, someone she had personally considered her greatest rival for many years. If Lili saw the look of annoyance on Asuka's face, it didn't show; she just walked elegantly to the center of the ring like she owned it, all the while thanking Lady Luck for the opportunity to fight her rival.



SIGNATURE MOVES

WING KNEE CANNON ALSTROMERIA



EDDY GORDO



DON'T THINK I'LL GO EASY ON YOU.

Eddy Gordo went to G Corporation to exact revenge on Kazuya Mishima for murdering his father. After he'd taken out a crowd of guards, a young girl in a strange outfit stood before him, and struck a pose. "You're not getting past me, old man! Teehee!"

What did she mean by 'old man'? Confused and irritated by her appearance and disrespectful tone, but aware of the threat she posed, Eddy prepared to fight.



COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: BRAZIL
FIGHTING STYLE: CAPOEIRA
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN 3*

FIGHTING STYLES MODELED after real-world disciplines is one of the hallmarks of *Tekken*, and nowhere does it leap from the screen more than in the case of Eddy Gordo.

It only takes a round watching Eddy bound about the arena to see that he stands out. That's because he fights using the art of capoeira, a dance-like fighting technique developed in Brazil by African slaves.

When slavery was eventually abolished in Brazil in the late 19th century, it was survived by capoeira. Capoeiristas worked as bodyguards, or would organize public fights for entertainment. Despite its beauty, the martial art – which gave formal slaves a means of resisting the ruling class – drove fear into the Portuguese colonists, and capoeira was eventually banned. It was not until the late 20th century that it began to see a resurgence.

Eddy was born into one of the richest families in Brazil, but lost his father to members of the cartels the elder Gordo was attempting to dismantle. To protect Eddy from a similar fate, his father told him to confess to the murder and hide away in prison. There, Eddy met an elderly capoeira master, and through the dance fighting saw his path to revenge. Eddy's been bounding around Iron Fist arenas ever since.

Most capoeiristas wear white; but Eddy bucks tradition by sporting a leopard-print jacket with no shirt.



SIGNATURE MOVE

RODEO



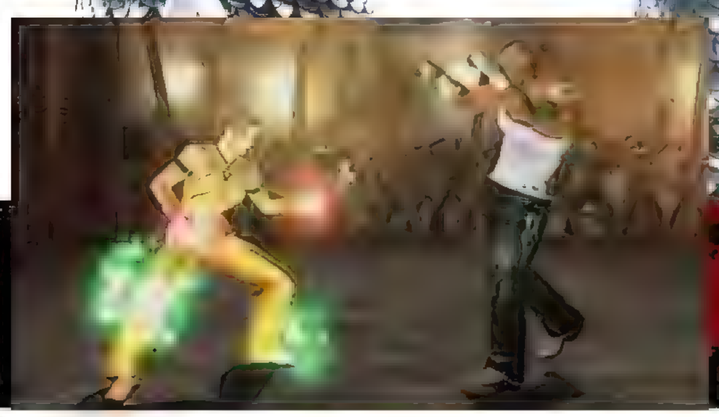
CHRISTIE MONTEIRO

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: BRAZIL
FIGHTING STYLE: CAPOEIRA
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN 4*

The granddaughter of a legendary capoeira master. She began her path as a practitioner of capoeira when Eddy Gordo, a pupil of her grandfather's, started teaching her. Her grandfather had come down with a fatal illness, and then suddenly disappeared... along with Eddy.

CHRISTIE MONTEIRO STEPPED onto the stage in *Tekken 4* as a more lithe stand-in for Eddy Gordo while he was off on a revenge tour against some murderous drug dealers. She's also the granddaughter of the capoeira master who trained Eddy in prison. To repay his master, Eddy later trained Christie. It was a noble gesture – and in keeping with Eddy's disregard for tradition, given that male capoeiristas historically kept women out of the martial art.

Unfortunately, it seems that Christie learned Eddy's lax approach to shirts as well as his fighting skills.



SIGNATURE MOVE

SHADOW DANCER



FENG WEI

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: CHINA
FIGHTING STYLE: CHINESE KENPO
FIRST APPEARANCE: TEKKEN 5

FENG WEI'S THIRST for power is so unquenchable and unceasing that he makes Bryan Fury look downright complicated by comparison. After Feng had risen to the top of his dojo, his master Shinken (literally "God Fist") confronted Feng for fighting outside of the dojo. Feng killed him.

So vast has the *Tekken* roster become that designers have begun developing their own fictional fighting disciplines. Though Feng's metal arm bangles and move list are based on the Cantonese martial art of hung gar, chasing a more powerful fictional fighting style is central to Feng Wei's journey. Having killed his master, Feng sought out the ancient God Fist scrolls in hopes of becoming the most powerful combatant on the planet. But the scrolls offered only a riddle:

"Defeat all other masters and conquer their styles; the perfect warrior transcends all to become the Dragon God."

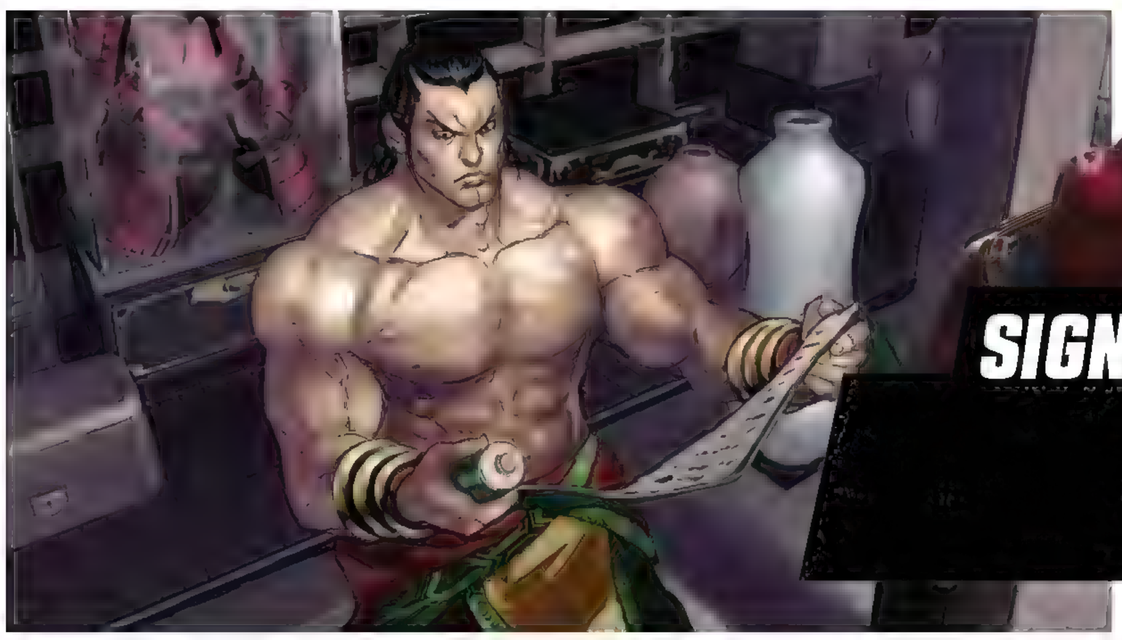
If Feng were to defeat all the other great masters of the world – and all the combatants of the Iron Fist Tournament – would he literally absorb their techniques, transforming Feng into a flesh-and-blood Mokujin? Or would the skill he would need to develop to defeat them all make him the best fighter in the world by default? Not even Feng knows.



COME ON!

Feng Wei had always abided by what was written on the God Fist scroll: "Defeat all other masters and conquer their styles; the perfect warrior transcends all to become the Dragon God." Having fought masters of many different styles, Feng returned to his childhood training ground to continue his intense training regime. Then one day, an unexpected visitor appeared before Feng: a mysterious man who exuded strength. When the man made it clear that his desire was to fight, Feng had no reason to refuse.

He accepted his opponent's challenge in silence, and prepared to battle.



SIGNATURE MOVE

IRON FORTRESS



JOSIE RIZAL

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: PHILIPPINES
FIGHTING STYLE: ESKRIMA-BASED KICKBOXING
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN 7*



I GOT THIS!

Josie Rizal tried her best to support her family by balancing two jobs. One as a model, and one as a professional kickboxer. One day, while she was out running on her usual training course along the mountain roads, she was suddenly confronted by an enormous, hairy creature!

Josie screamed, and then fled half in tears, but the creature remained hot on her heels. Realizing she had little chance of escape, Josie abruptly came to a halt, then turned trembling, to face her feral foe...

LIKE MOST MILLENNIALS, Josie struggles to do her best for her family by balancing multiple jobs. Unlike most Millennials, Jodie's jobs are modeling and kickboxing.

Josie fills the Muay-Thai-sized hole left by Bruce Irvin in *Tekken 7*. But Josie's kickboxing is styled after Eskrima, or Arnis, a weapons-based Filipino martial art mostly focused on defense and counterstrikes. During the Spanish occupation, Arnis was banned by the Spanish Army, so practitioners disguised it as stage performance. Maybe there's a link between modeling and kickboxing after all.

Josie is named after Filipino anti-colonial hero José Rizal.





SIGNATURE MOVE

FULL BLAST KICK

KATARINA ALVES

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: BRAZIL
FIGHTING STYLE: SAVATE
FIRST APPEARANCE: TEKKEN 7



SORRY, BUT YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO DIE.

LIKE MANY OF her fellow combatants, Katarina's fate was shaped by her parentage. She doesn't know her biological parents, but she was raised by an adopted father who trained her to fight using savate.

Savate, developed by French sailors, is unique among kickboxing techniques for allowing practitioners to wear shoes. This suits Katarina, whose dress – like that of her fellow Brazilian fighters, Eddy Gordo and Christina Monteiro – seems better fit for Carnival than competition. Yet Katarina manages to turn high heels from disadvantage to secret weapon. "Savate," after all, is French for "old shoe."

When her adoptive father disappeared, Katarina entered the Iron Fist Tournament in search of him – only to discover that he had been mutated into Gigas, a mindless and very red force of nature. In *Tekken*, at least, orphans can't catch a break.

Katarina Alves lost both her parents at a young age, and spent several years at an orphanage before being adopted by a man she'd never met. Initially, Katarina rebelled against him using a whole manner of profane language, but the man's kindness and patience eventually wore her hard exterior down. In time, they grew close, though her penchant for profane language remained. One day, Katarina's adoptive father vanished. As much as she wanted to find him, she lacked the money to do so. But then she learned of the King of Iron Fist Tournament.

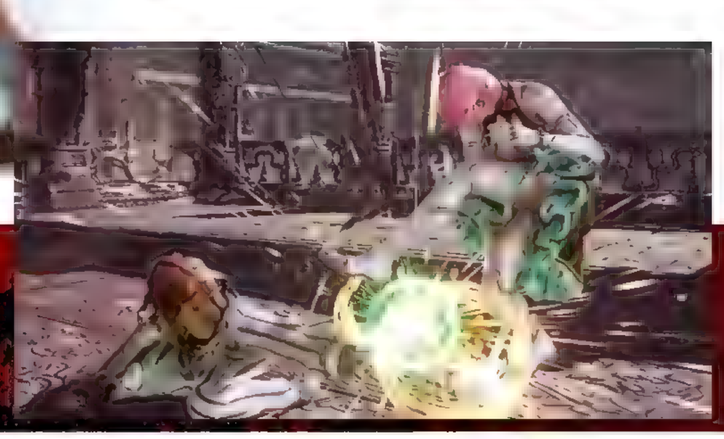
The savage techniques the man had taught her gave Katarina hope that she could win and take the cash prize. The day of the first match arrived, and the arena was none other than the roof of G Corporation's Millennium Tower.

When Katarina first laid eyes on her opponent, all she saw was an enormous hulk of muscle. There was no way he could be human...



SIGNATURE MOVE

NIMBLE CUTTER



KING / KING II



LET'S DO THIS!

King is not only a masked professional wrestler, but also the proud owner of an orphanage. Recently, King's sworn friend and comrade, Craig Marduk, as well as the man King called his master, both engaged in a bloody fight which left them with critical injuries.

King desperately wanted to come to his friends' rescue, but knew that their operations wouldn't come cheap. At the same time, King's orphanage was in constant danger owing to the war that raged between G Corporation and the Mishima Zaibatsu.

Finding himself caught between a rock and a hard place, King entered the King of Iron Fist Tournament with his eyes set firmly on the cash prize.

THE LEOPARD LUCHADORS

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: MEXICO
FIGHTING STYLE: PRO WRESTLING
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN / TEKKEN 3*



FOR OVER 100 YEARS, the lucha libre has traveled Mexico, entertaining the blue collar masses. Masked combatants took to a roped-off rink to compete in an operatic stage performance using a modifier form of Greco-Roman wrestling. The last masked man standing draws cheers and roses from the crowd, and adoration for the colors stitched into his mask. The luchadores are the precursors for modern, branded wrestling, including the WWF and WWE.

In the late '80s, a new luchador stepped into the ring for the first time. His name was Fray Tormenta, or Friar Storm. No one knew it at the time, but Fray's real name was Sergio Gutiérrez Benítez, and he was a Catholic Priest. He had decided to become a professional wrestler in secret to raise money for his orphanage, founded under the Piarist Order. He would continue to wrestle to keep the orphanage open for 23 years.

Fray was most likely the inspiration for the original King. Though King's mask was a bit more robust that the three-holed fabric and glitter masks of tradition (indeed, he seems to be wearing a literal leopard head over his face), he seemed to be a luchador in every other way. And yet King decided to take his pro wrestling skills to the Iron Fist Tournament, where he would be pitted against trained fighters from every discipline. He was doing it, of course, to save his orphanage.

Over the course of the *Tekken* series, the signature moves of real professional wrestlers – including John Cena, Undertaker, and modern luchador Rey Mysterio – would be incorporated into King and King II's arsenals,

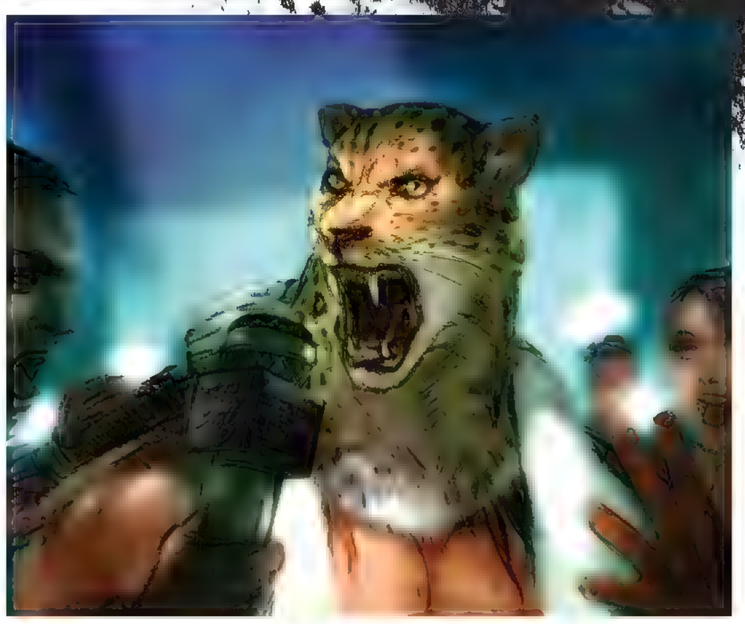
King saved his orphanage by taking third in the original Iron Fist Tournament. Unfortunately, after struggling with depression and alcoholism,


KING
ANGER OF BEAST

CHARACTER EVOLUTION







King was killed off-screen by Ogre in the lead-up to *Tekken 3*. A former orphan from King's orphanage took up his mantle, training under King's longtime rival and tag team partner, Armor King. King II continues to fight in the Iron Fist Tournament in King's honor and for the underprivileged children of Mexico: a digital Fray Tormenta.



KING / ARMOR KING / KING II












KING
KING



SIGNATURE MOVES

ROLLING DEATH CRADLE



SCREWDRIVER

SPINNING THROW / GIANT SWING

EXPLODER

KONVICT KICK



BLACK BOMB

LUCKY CHLOE

ARE YOU READY?

Lucky Chloe is a pop sensation, and the face of the G Corporation brand. When a mysterious man burst into G Corp and took out guard after guard with dance-like techniques, Lucky Chloe fearlessly walked right up to him and blocked his path.

She threw the man one of her trademark smiles and issued him a challenge: Fight her, and if he loses he'll have to work as her backup dancer! Without caring if he'd accepted the conditions or not, she prepared for battle.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: SECRET
FIGHTING STYLE: FREESTYLE DANCE, ACROBATICS
FIRST APPEARANCE: TEKKEN 7

KAZUYA MAY HAVE followed his father's footsteps in turning an international conglomerate into a force for worldwide evil, but he knew one thing Heihachi didn't: If you want to get away with the very worst things imaginable and still turn a profit, you do it with branding.

Lucky Chloe is the smiling face of the G Corporation, a bubbly voice in a pink cat ears that almost makes us forget that her parent company is probably experimenting on real cats this very instant. When she fights, her hypnotic dance moves become efficient weapons – danger lying just beneath the shiny surface, just like G Corp itself.





LUCKY CHUCK NORRIS?

PRIOR TO THE launch of *Tekken 7*, Lucky was revealed as a new character in a 20th Anniversary stream. The backlash was immediate. Western gaming press was skeptical of the sexualized, "kawaii" design, and fans took her presence as a sign that *Tekken* was trending further from the dignified roots they held dear – the *Tekken* where buff, spiky-haired men could fight a bear for control of a weapons manufacturer and mean it.

Harada took to twitter to respond to the backlash, stating that Lucky would be an exclusive to Asia and Europe – regions where she would be appreciated and accepted. For North America, perhaps, he would replace her with "muscular & skinhead character." Western gaming press doubled down on the controversy by reporting Harada's tweet as news. Backlash to the backlash was immediate.

Harada was forced to clarify. He had been kidding, of course: Lucky Chloe would be available to *Tekken 7* players worldwide. Harada emphasized, however, that she would be only one of many new characters. With a roster of over 30 characters, not every player will love every character.

Lucky has nonetheless become a staple at conventions and competitions among cosplayers. Though she might not look like a traditional *Tekken* character, she is born from a traditional *Tekken* idea. In a game centered on Japan and Japanese characters, Lucky is of a new wave of Japanese culture: idol anime and Harajuku girls and increased foreign obsession with Japanese fashion.

SIGNATURE MOVE

LUCKY CORKSCREW



LEI WULONG



COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: HONG KONG
FIGHTING STYLE: 5 FORM KUNG FU AND ZUI QUAN
FIRST APPEARANCE: TEKKEN 2



LEI IS FROM Hong Kong and is a cop—known in his home city as "Supercop."

While Wulong's use of kung-fu sets him apart at Interpol, it makes him a welcome fit at the King of Iron Fist Tournament. But unlike most of the other combatants, Lei isn't there for personal glory. He almost always enters hot on the heels of a big case, ready to blow the lid off a criminal plot (almost always perpetrated by one of the Mishima).

Lei has a tough go of crime fighting. He's often failed to arrest his most wanted targets, and halted even fewer Mishima plots in his Tekken tenure. Still, he perseveres.

Lei fights using Wu Xing, which literally means "Five Forms." The five forms are modeled after animals both real and mythic: snake, crane, tiger, leopard, and dragon. Wu Xing's myriad stances make Lei Wulong a difficult character to master. Like their real-life counterparts, practitioners of digital kung fu can take years to learn the proper techniques and counters for every situation.

After executing certain moves, Lei will sometimes grab his back in pain. Too old for life inside the arena? Perhaps. But as long as the police officers of kung fu flicks keep fighting for Hong Kong, it's a safe bet that Lei will, too.



CHARACTER EVOLUTION















LEI WULONG

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO REMAIN SILENT.



SIGNATURE MOVES

WINDMILL
PHOENIX STRIKE
DRUNKEN RAPID FIST



MICHELLE CHANG



COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FIGHTING STYLE: XIN YI LIU HE QUAN AND BAJI QUAN
FIRST APPEARANCE: TEKKEN





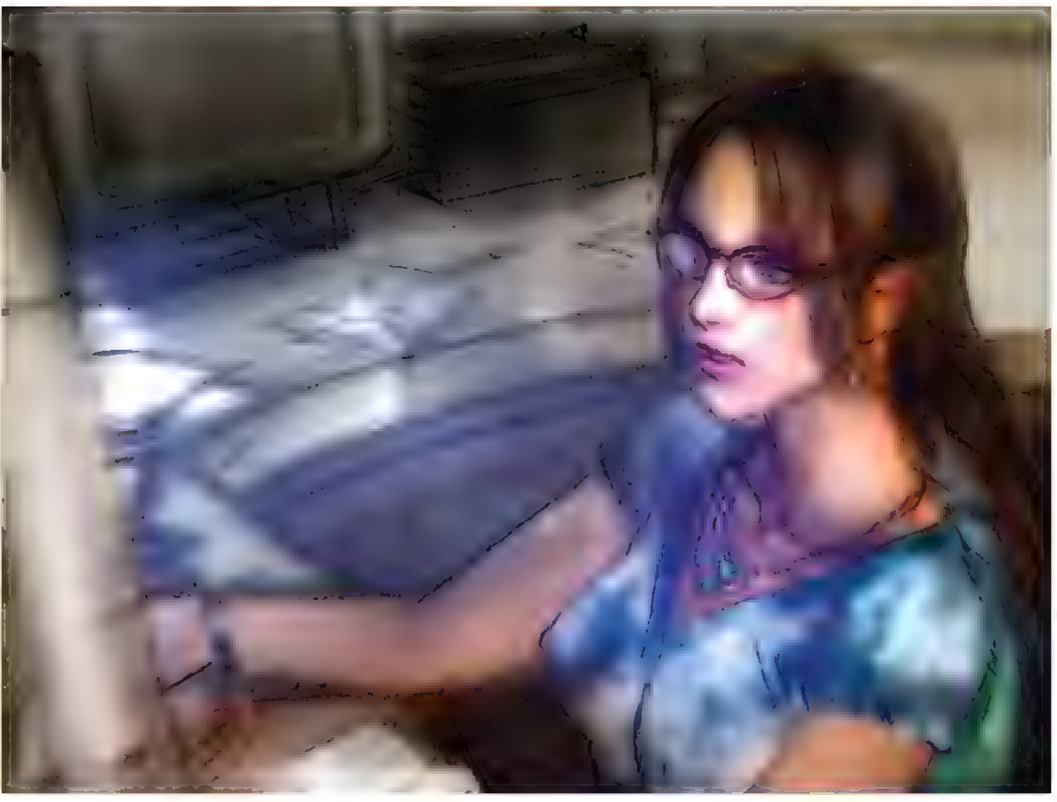


THE DAUGHTER OF a man from Hong Kong and a woman from an unnamed Native American tribe, Michelle Chang is one of the few biracial characters in all of *Tekken*. Heihachi Mishima sent Michelle's father to America in search of a powerful ancient artifact. He knew there was a chance the mission would fail—but he never anticipated his point man falling in love and staying in America to start a family.

It's never stated what tribe Michelle and Julia are from (there are thousands), and the ambiguity is only underscored by their geographic background. Officially, Michelle and Julia are both from Arizona. While studying archaeology, Julia discovered that the forests of her homeland are doomed by the encroachment of desert and makes it her life's mission to reforest whatever region of Arizona she's from—even though, as anyone who has ever been to Arizona can tell you, there aren't many forests there to begin with.









It also turns out that the ancient artifact Heihachi had been after was Michelle's amulet, which was eventually passed down to Julia. The amulet was instrumental in awakening the Ancient Ogre from his slumber. However, both the amulet and Ancient Ogre are Aztec in origin; and even at the height of its powers, the Aztec empire only stretched as far north as central Mexico – still significantly south of Arizona.

Meanwhile, Julia's status as an adoptive orphan comes close to touching on the modern plight of Native Americans, particularly the generations pulled away from their homes and sent to government-run residential schools – but her story so far stops short of making any profound statements.

In *Tekken Tag 2*, Julia dons a lucha libre mask and fights as her alter ego, Jaycee. Maybe there's something more to her Mexican roots after all.

JULIA CHANG

MIGUEL CABALLERO ROJO

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: SPAIN
FIGHTING STYLE: BRAWLING
FIRST APPEARANCE: TEKKEN 6

YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'RE READY TO LOSE.

After losing his sister in an airstrike ordered by the Mishima Zaibatsu under the direction of Jin Kazama, Miguel Caballero Rojo devoted his life to seeking revenge. However, when Jin suddenly vanishes without a trace, Miguel's life purpose disappears along with him.

From that point forward, Miguel began to wander like a specter from battle-torn town to battle-torn town. One day, as he ambled through rows of dilapidated buildings, he stumbled across a strangely familiar hooded man. There in front of him was none other than his sworn enemy, Jin.

Consumed by both euphoria and rage, Miguel becomes frenzied and goes in for the kill.

IF THERE WERE a Tekken yearbook, this brash and chiseled Spaniard would certainly be elected "Most Likely to Remove His Shirt and Lead a Bench-Clearing Brawl During a Football Match." Miguel is less refined and much, much less trained than his competition, but often succeeds through sheer aggression – and distractingly epic chest hair.

When his sister was killed by a Mishima Zaibatsu bombing attack, Miguel vowed revenge on Jin Kazama.

Miguel's lack of training give his fighting a uniquely rough feel. He's strongest on offense, where he uses his strength, cheap shots, and irrational confidence to beat down opponents. In his Savage stance, move cancels can lead to devastating high-damage combos.

Though in *Tekken 6* Miguel debuted with a matador alternate outfit, it was scrapped for *Tag 2* and *7* to do away with the obvious stereotype. Or maybe after trying it on, Miguel vowed revenge on Harada, too.



SIGNATURE MOVE

BURLA



SHAHEEN

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: SAUDI ARABIA
FIGHTING STYLE: MILITARY FIGHTING
FIRST APPEARANCE: TEKKEN 7

SAUDI ARABIA, SHAHEEN'S home country, was first depicted in *Tekken* in *Tag Tournament 2*. The level "Modern Oasis" was built inside of an oil rig. Some pointed out that having an oil rig as the first and only representation of the Middle East in *Tekken* was a reductive stereotype.

So when Shaheen was being created, Harada made it a point to be transparent about the process, and encouraged feedback on his character design from Muslim fans. The end result was less flashy in style and in combat than originally conceived: the shemahl and agal-adorned Shaheen of *Tekken 7*. Shaheen has since been lauded for his representation, even if it did take two decades for the series to introduce a Muslim character.

Shaheen is a former military man who worked for a private oil company before his friend died under mysterious circumstances. When the company was then bought by G Corporation, Shaheen went in search of foul play and soon discovered the true nature of Kazuya Mishima.

But Shaheen is torn. His life and religion have taught him that revenge can only make things worse. It's likely that passing this idea long to anyone in the Mishima family would have a greater impact on *Tekken* than killing Kazuya ever could.





Shaheen works for a private military firm specializing in the provision of security services. During his time in the army, he earned a reputation as an expert in one-on-one combat.

One day, his friend and owner of a company involved in the oil industry died suddenly under mysterious circumstances. In the postmortem the death was listed as accidental, but Shaheen suspected foul play when his friend's company was suddenly bought by G Corporation and the management, all family members, resigned. He began to investigate the matter, and a relative of a close friend confided in him that a demonic man was pulling the strings at G Corp: Kazuya Mishima. Shaheen struggled to believe a real demon could exist, but his investigations revealed that Kazuya could be worse than any of hell's creations.

Shaheen was torn: Should he take revenge for his friend's death by destroying that demon, or not? Wracked with doubt, he embarked on a solo mission to infiltrate G Corp.

SIGNATURE MOVE

HUNTING FALCON DIVE



WANG JINREI

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: CHINA
FIGHTING STYLE: XIN YI LIU HE QUAN
FIRST APPEARANCE: TEKKEN

WANG IS JINPACHI Mishima's best friend, and the oldest playable fighter in all of *Tekken*. He emerged from seclusion to honor the memory of his friend, and eventually helped rid Jinpachi's semi-deceased body of the Devil once and for all.

Wang fights using Xin Yi Liu He Quan ("Heart, Intention, and Six Harmonies Fist"), one of the oldest traditional forms of kung fu. His feeble frame belies his fluid movements and devastating close-range game. Famously, his first bid in the Iron Fist Tournament ended in a draw with Marshall Law (which sent Law back to San Francisco in shame), a nod to traditional kung fu master Ip Man.

Jinrei's story is so closely tied to Jinpachi's that other than their eternal friendship, not much else is known about the old man. It's difficult not to wonder if Heihachi and Kazuya would have been such monsters if only they'd had such a friend.



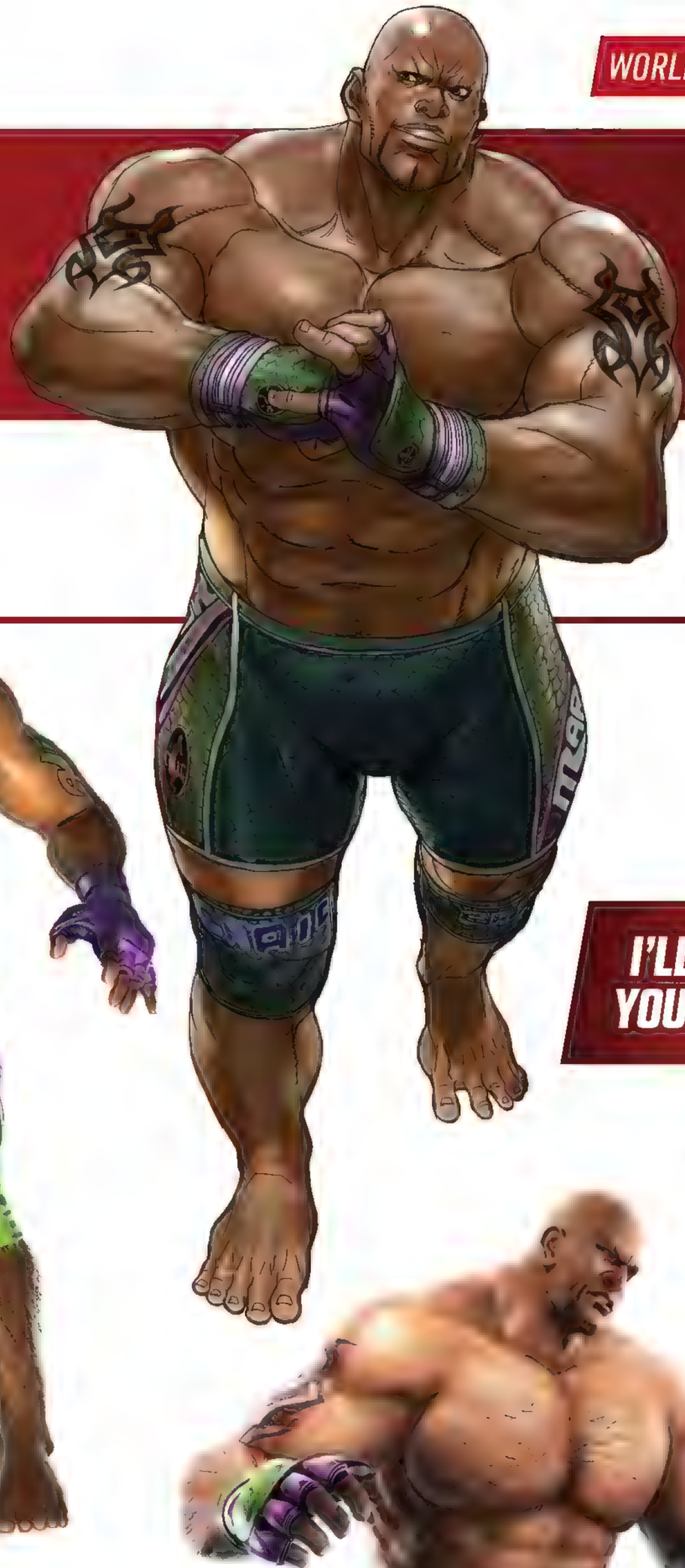


SIGNATURE MOVE

HEADLOCK TOSS

CRAIG MARDUK

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: AUSTRALIA
FIGHTING STYLE: VALE TUDO
FIRST APPEARANCE: TEKKEN 4



THE HULK FROM Down Under began his *Tekken* career by killing Armor King — not in a tournament fight, but in a bar brawl in Arizona. He was found guilty of second-degree murder and thrown in jail. First-degree murder, of course, is premeditated, which would have required that Marduk stop to think about what he's doing — something he's dubiously capable of.

(Whether or not Marduk's sordid origin story is intended as a slight to his home country of Australia, which was founded as a British prison colony, is Harada's guess.)

Luckily for players, Marduk was released from prison and given a second chance. No, not at being a better person. At punching people's faces in — the only thing ol' Craig has ever known.

Marduk's fights using vale tudo, Portuguese for "anything goes." Low blows, pins, leg locks, and high kicks are all fair game on the vale tudo path to victory — really, anything short of biting or clawing someone's eyes out — making Marduk the perfect representative of the Mixed Martial Arts age.







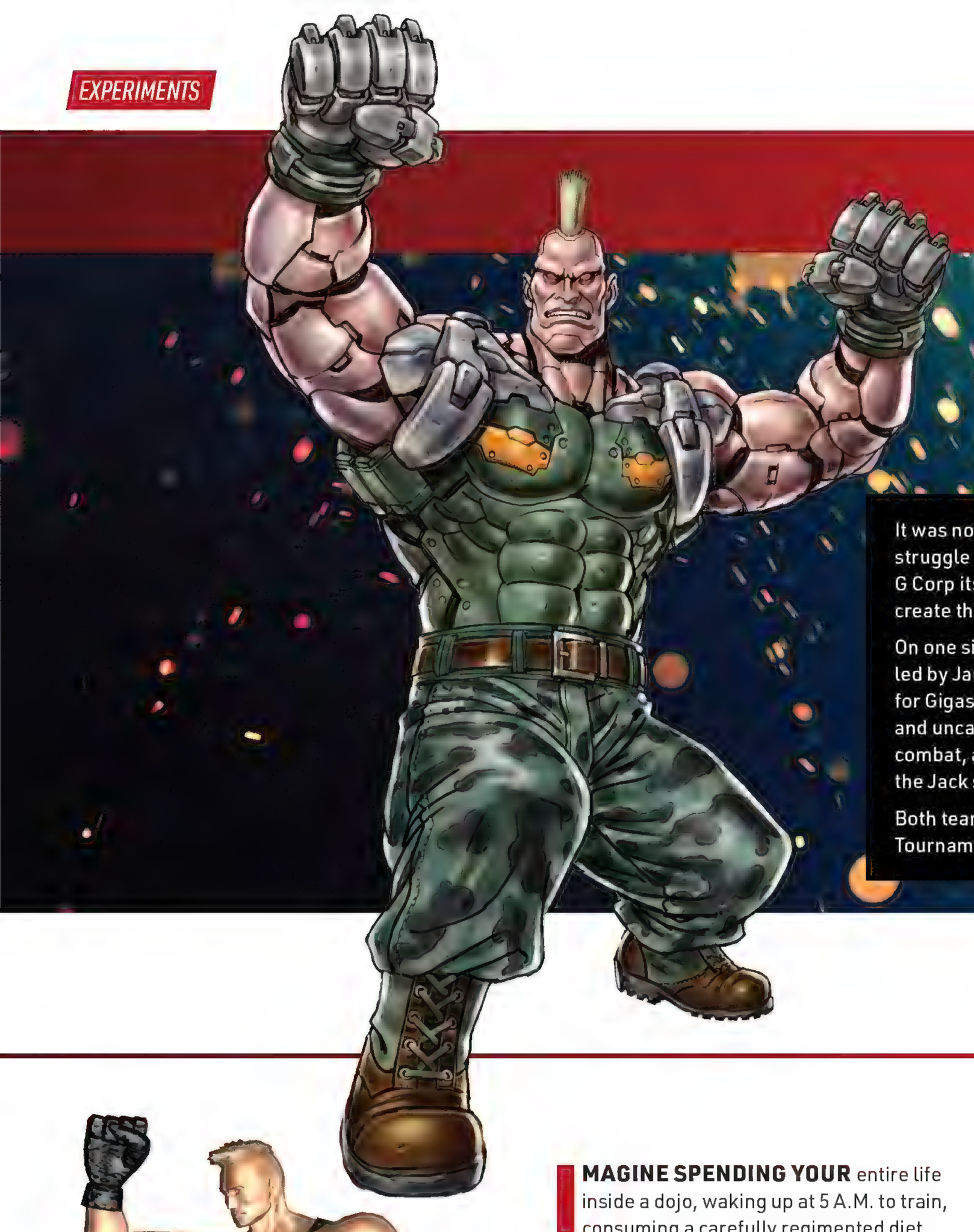


SIGNATURE MOVE

SHIN BREAKER



JACK



It was no secret that G Corporation was locked in a power struggle with the Mishima Zaibatsu. However, within G Corp itself, another battle was raging: the battle to create the ultimate next-gen humanoid weapon.

On one side was the development team behind the Jack series led by Jane; on the other was the research team responsible for Gigas, a bio-enhanced super human. With his massive size and uncanny mobility, Gigas was hailed for his versatility in combat, and some saw him as more than capable of dislodging the Jack series from its position as G Corp's premier weapon.

Both teams entered their weapons into the King of Iron Fist Tournament to decide once and for all which was the best.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: RUSSIA
FIGHTING STYLE: BRUTE FORCE
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN*



IMAGINE SPENDING YOUR entire life inside a dojo, waking up at 5 A.M. to train, consuming a carefully regimented diet, sculpting your body, honing every action and reflex on your way to becoming one of the most lethal hand-to-hand combatants on Earth, then entering a tournament of the world's elite fighters to prove your mettle—only to line up across from your first opponent and see that they're... a robot.

And not just any robot—a robot created in a Russian lab for the express purpose of killing humans.

And yet, either due to pride or tournament loophole, no human fighter has ever lodged a complaint against the 7-foot-tall murderbot's inclusion. In fact, there has been a Jack in every Iron Fist Tournament, each time upgraded with new, cutting-edge murderbot technology.

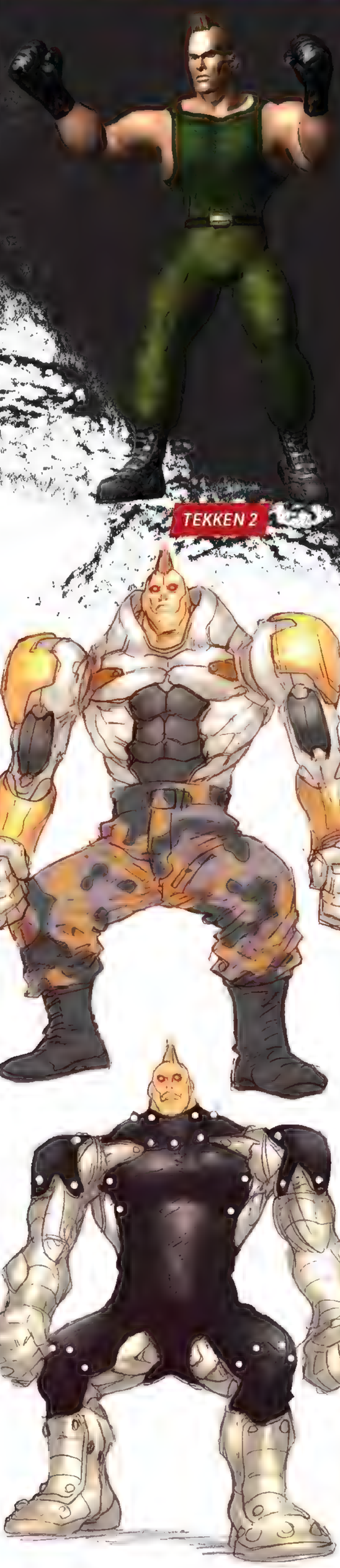
There's another side to this story, of course. Imagine being Jane, a physicist who was rescued by a Jack-2 robot as a young girl, and spending all of your free time upgrading your oversized rock-'em-sock-'em robot. All it has to do is beat up some dumb humans and you—by proxy—will run the Mishima Zaibatsu. But no. Each time your upgrades fall short.

Thankfully, Jane and Jack have gained some recent job security at G Corporation.

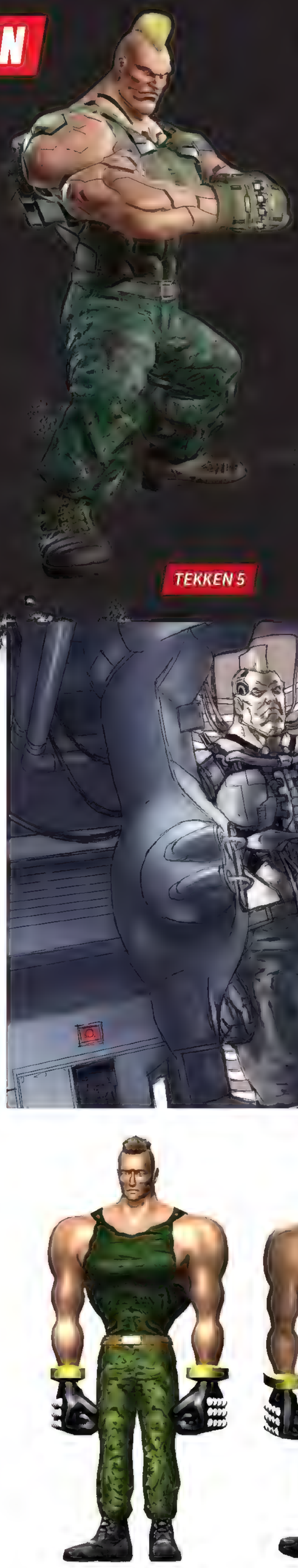
Jack's simple moveset and brute strength have kept him in the mix at even the highest levels of *Tekken* play. In fact, since *Tekken 5*, Jack has probably seen more action than any other character at professional tournaments. So while maybe his non-human advantages may not have paid off canonically, Jack and Jane can take pride in knowing they've racked up untold thousands in real-life *Tekken* tournament earnings.



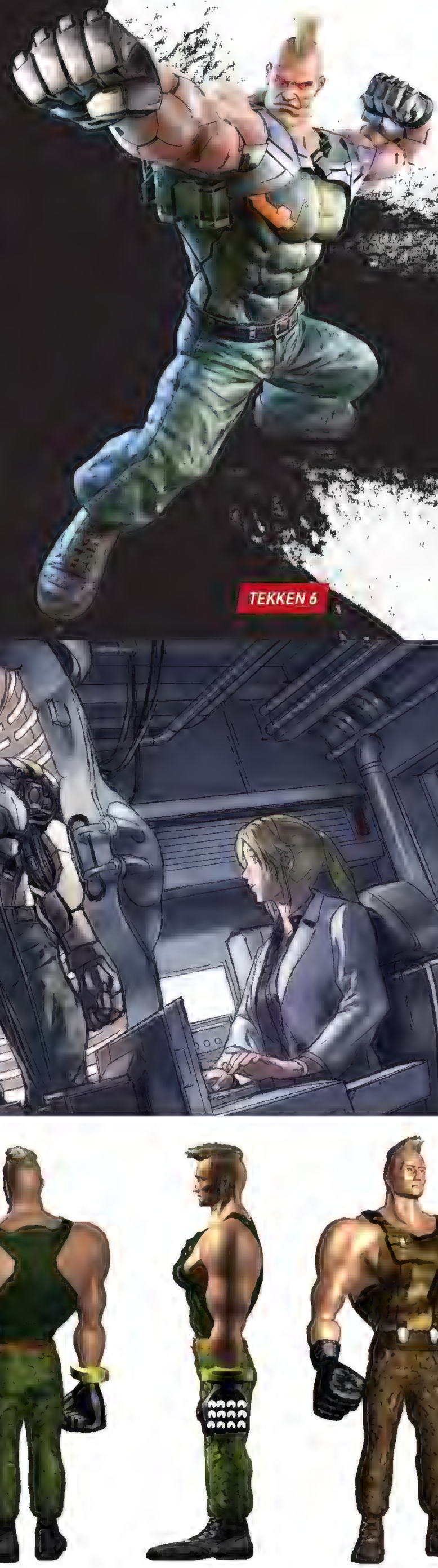
CHARACTER EVOLUTION



TEKKEN 2



TEKKEN 5



TEKKEN 6

Their check, I'm told, is in the mail.

Originally a representation of Cold War Russia – a relentless, unfeeling opponent, making use of cutting-edge technology to punch the rest of the world in the face – Jack has inadvertently become relevant again in the modern political landscape. Despite being continually upgraded, Jack is a holdover from a bygone age of Russian influence. He is also a comrade without a country, having fled with Jane as her part-caretaker, part-pet. But Jack also provides an oddly prescient foreshadowing of the rising Russian mentality that the Cold War never truly ended.



DEV / PLAYER QUOTE:

"I like simple, powerful characters. I use Jack to lead opponents down a path, and when they think they know what I'm doing, I can use it against them.

–ANAKIN



SIGNATURE MOVES



GIGATON PUNCH

PISTON GUN



DEBUGGER

JACKHAMMER

DOCTOR BOSCONOVITCH

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: RUSSIA
FIGHTING STYLE: EVERYTHING HE KNOWS
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN 3*



"TREMBLE BEFORE THE MIGHT OF SCIENCE!"

THOUGH HE HAS the name and appearance of a mad scientist – and he is one, kind of – Doc Bosconovitch's biggest role in the Tekkenverse is to demonstrate the truly twisted nature of Kazuya Mishima.

After taking over the Mishima Zaibatsu at the end of *Tekken*, Kazuya kidnapped Bosconovitch and forced him to develop a host of morally objectionable weapons and experiments, including – but not limited to:

- Prototype Jack, a killer robot
- Roger, a boxing kangaroo
- Alex, a boxing Velociraptor

So in addition to being a kidnapper and warmonger, Kazuya also seemed intent on pioneering a genetically enhanced version of dog fighting. If that weren't enough, he also intended to execute the doctor when he was through. Oh, how our hero has fallen.

Doctor Bosconovitch's inclusion as a playable character in *Tekken 3* is a testament to *Tekken*'s innovation. It would have been easy, and perhaps predictable, to make Bosconovitch a trained fighter, ripped beneath the lab coat; or to have him enhance his frail figure using some of his own genetic modification and risky experimentation. Instead, Bosconovitch fights with the innovative desperation of a kidnapped 130-pound super-scientist. He ducks, crawls, claws, throws test tubes, and does whatever he can to keep up with *Tekken*'s host of intimidating fighters. It's both hilarious and refreshing.

Kazuya didn't manage to execute Bosconovitch before he could be saved by Yoshimitsu, who owed the doctor his life. Years later, in *Tekken 6*, Bosconovitch would create a lifelike robot recreation of his deceased daughter, Alisa Bosconovitch; which would be awesome if it weren't so tragic.



SIGNATURE MOVE

PANIC DOCTOR

ALISA BOSCONOVITCH

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: RUSSIA
FIGHTING STYLE: HIGH MOBILITY COMBAT
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN 6*

A LITA. MAJOR KUSANAGI. Android 18. The persocoms. Female murder robots are a common trope in Japanese anime and manga. They tend to be as scantily clad and kawaii (Japanese for "cute") as they are violent, and Alisa Bosconovitch is no exception: How about some pink hair, high heels, and a miniskirt to go with your shrapnel-riddled demise?

The logic seems to be that if you can sprout rocket-powered metal wings and turn your hands into chainsaws, you might as well sport heels and an elaborate manicure—the better to lull opponents into a false sense of superiority.

Alisa was created by Doctor Bosconovitch in the image of his deceased daughter. It's the kind of creepy-but-sweet story that passes for emotional in the *Tekken*verse. Alisa is powerful, but difficult to control. Learn to execute her best moves, however, and Alisa can dish out the damage faster than you can flash a peace sign – all while remaining the most kawaii killer robot in all of *Tekken* (sorry, Jack).





I AM ALISA, NICE TO MEET YOU!

An android created by Dr. Bosconovitch as a bodyguard for Jin Kazama. Her design itself is modeled after Bosconovitch's own lost daughter. Her fighting capabilities are extremely high. She can perform attacks with high mobility using arm-mounted missiles and thrusters.

SIGNATURE MOVES

DOUBLE ROCKET PUNCH
SPAM BOMB (HEAD BOMB)

YOSHIMITSU

I AM PEERLESS.

With Heihachi reinstated as the CEO of the Mishima Zaibatsu, Yoshimitsu sensed something bad was afoot, and so entered the King of Iron Fist Tournament as way of confirming his suspicions.

His infiltration point would be the Mishima dojo. It seemed like the perfect location for collecting intelligence, and even though the building would act as the arena for his tournament match, Yoshimitsu approached from the air just in case.

When he entered the Mishima dojo, the place looked as though it had been hit by a typhoon.

Waiting for Yoshimitsu in the gloom was a charming young martial artist. Yoshimitsu couldn't say for sure, but he thought he seemed a little "tense...". Though his looks were enchanting, he also seemed dangerous, so Yoshimitsu braced himself for battle.

THE WEIRD WIELDER

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: JAPAN
FIGHTING STYLE: MANJI NINJUTSU
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN*



IT ONLY TAKES one glance at Yoshimitsu to see he's not like the other *Tekken* fighters. Just look at him. He's so *weird*. I mean, for starters, why is he allowed to fight with a sword?

Combat advantages aside, being a masked weirdo has paid dividends for Yoshimitsu, who has become one of the most recognizable fighters of the franchise. In each game, his appearance changes—but he always wields his iconic sword and always covers his face with a mask.

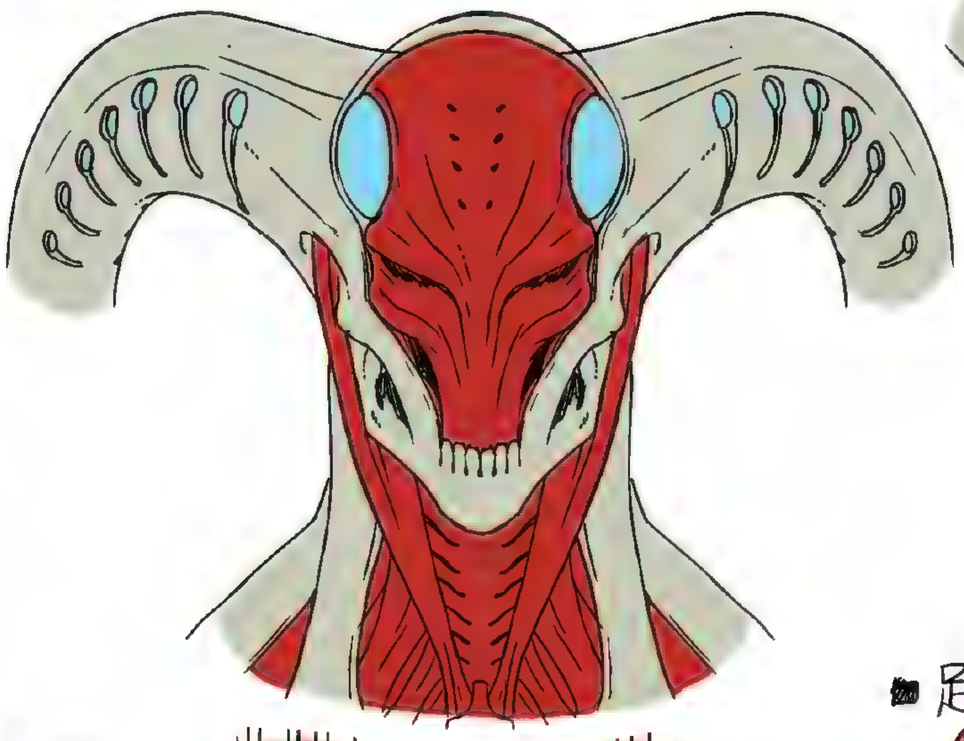
In the original English *Tekken* manual, Yoshimitsu was described as a "Space Ninja." Whether or not Yoshimitsu is actually from space is up for debate. Maybe the phrase was mistranslated. Maybe it's Yoshimitsu's way of heightening his own legend. Maybe it just sounds cool.

Regardless, having a weapon at the ready has allowed Yoshimitsu to travel far outside the usual borders of the Iron Fist Tournament: into Namco's other 3-D fighter, the weapons-based *Soulcalibur*. In that series, the legend of Yoshimitsu gets it due. Yoshimitsu, it turns out, is not a name, but the title given to the wielder of the eponymous sword. Each wielder maintains the same appearance and fighting style so that the long ling of Manji clan members who take up the sword appear to be a single immortal warrior.

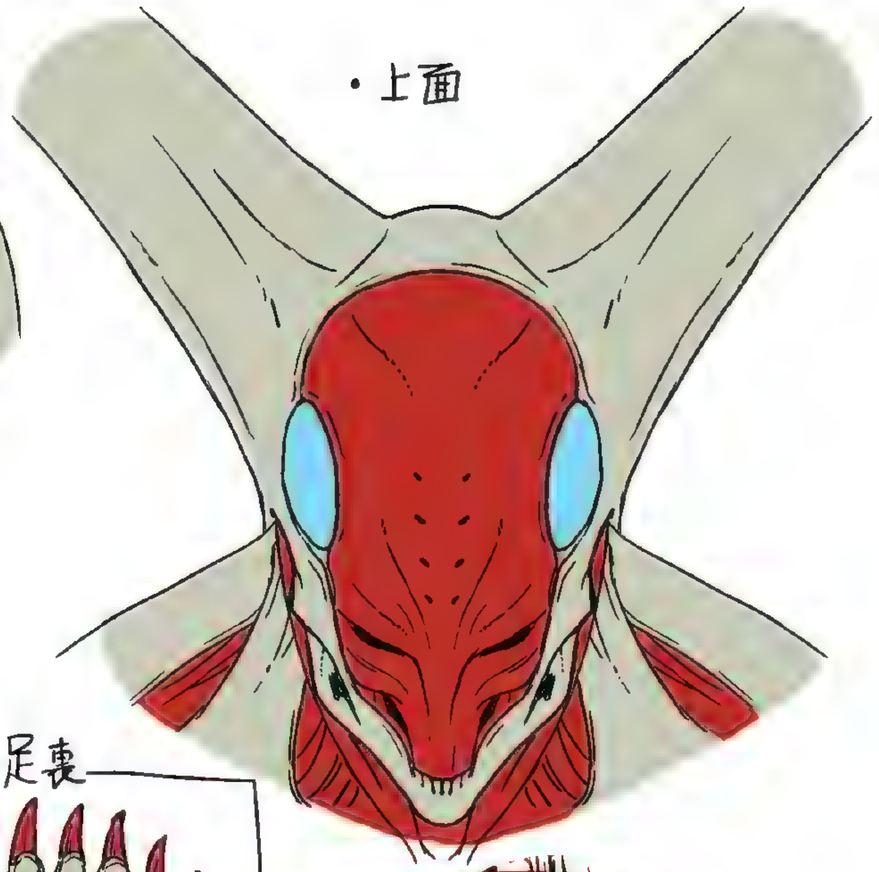
In *Tekken*, Yoshimitsu seems to be the same man throughout—though it still may be that he is only the most recent wielder of the katana. In the *Soulcalibur* series, the Yoshimitsu katana is a powerful, demonic blade, thirsty for blood. This idea crosses over into *Tekken 6* when Yoshimitsu realized his katana was losing its strength, and revealed that it retained its power by killing evildoers.



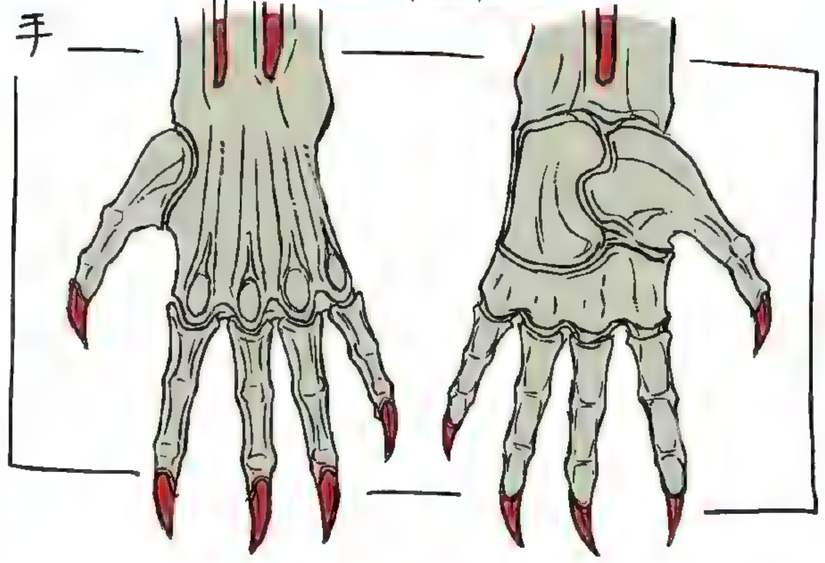
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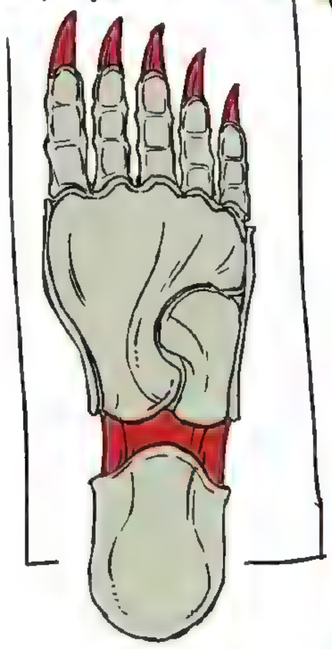
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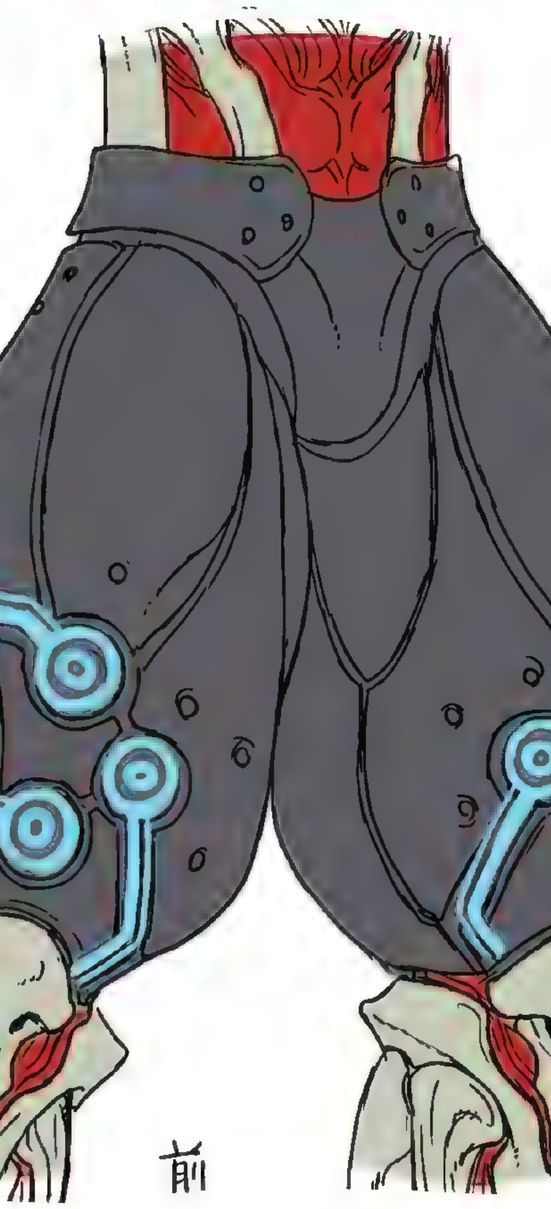




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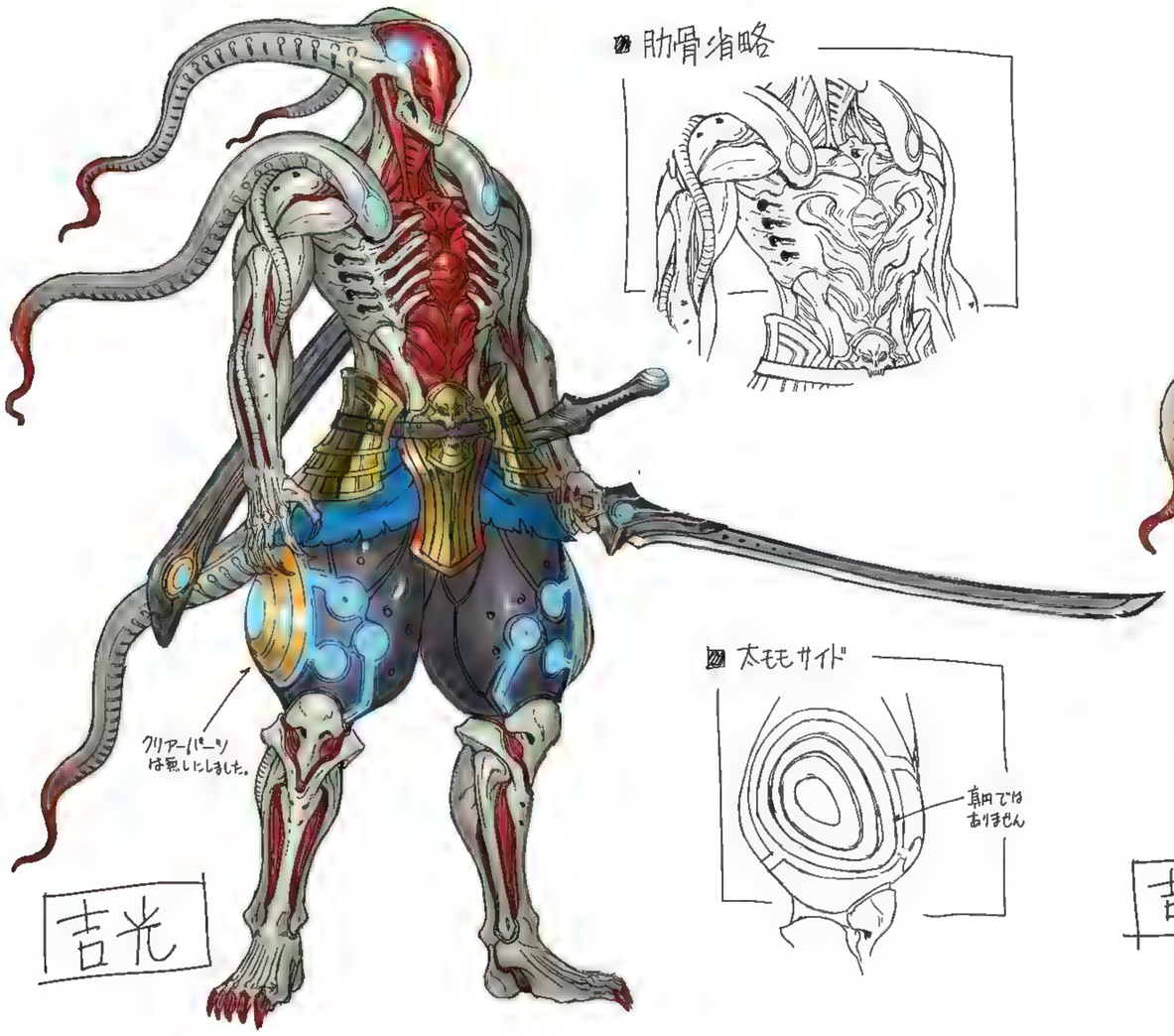
Fortunately for his opponents, the Robin Hood of *Tekken* is not a bloodthirsty man, preferring to use his skills to steal from the rich and give to the poor. As such, most of Yoshimitsu's moves don't make use of his katana.

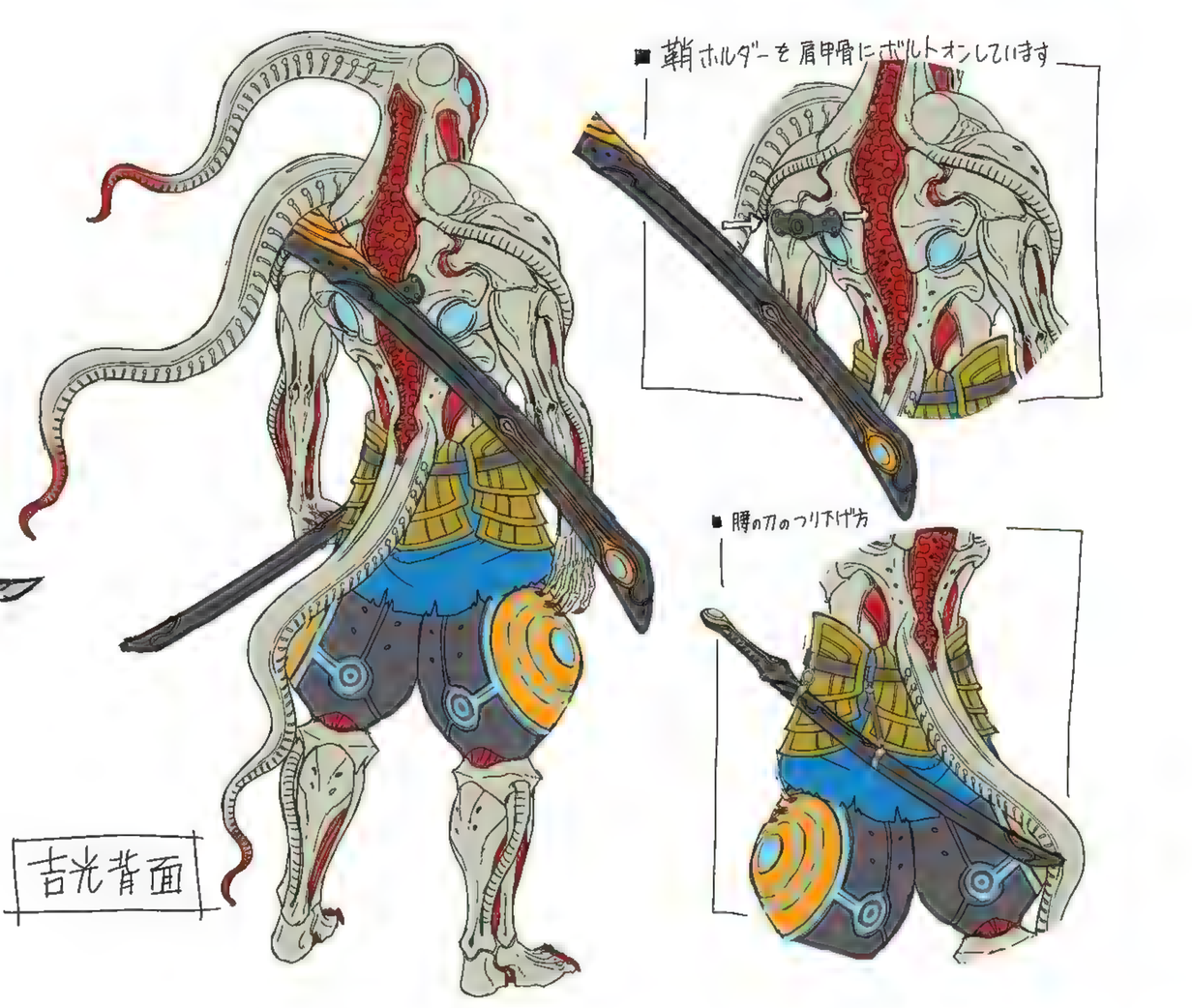
He is, however, one of the first *Tekken* fighters to make use of difference stances. Moving into different stances enables a different set of moves—an additional challenge both to learn and to counter.

Yoshimitsu is a man who defines himself by his unknowability, and his fighting style is no exception. The most iconic of his stances is his Flea stance, introduced in *Tekken 2*. To get into Flea stance, Yoshimitsu places the tip of his sword in the ground and balances upon the hilt.

Despite his title as *Tekken*'s resident "Space Ninja," there hasn't been any canonical confirmation that Yoshimitsu is an alien, although *Tekken 7* has leant legitimacy to the idea by depicting Yoshimitsu as a many-tentacled alien-like human hybrid. Whether or not the tentacles are just a fancy costume is anyone's guess.

And then there's the matter of Yoshimitsu's backstory. Many of Yoshimitsu's plots are tied to Doctor Bosconovitch, to whom Yoshimitsu owes his life. For what, exactly, it's never made clear. Is it possible Doctor Bosconovitch came in contact with alien life and was able to help it adapt life on Earth? Maybe. If an extraterrestrial who had learned how to be human from Kurosawa films happened to come into possession of a demonic sword, the result probably wouldn't be much different than the singular Yoshimitsu.

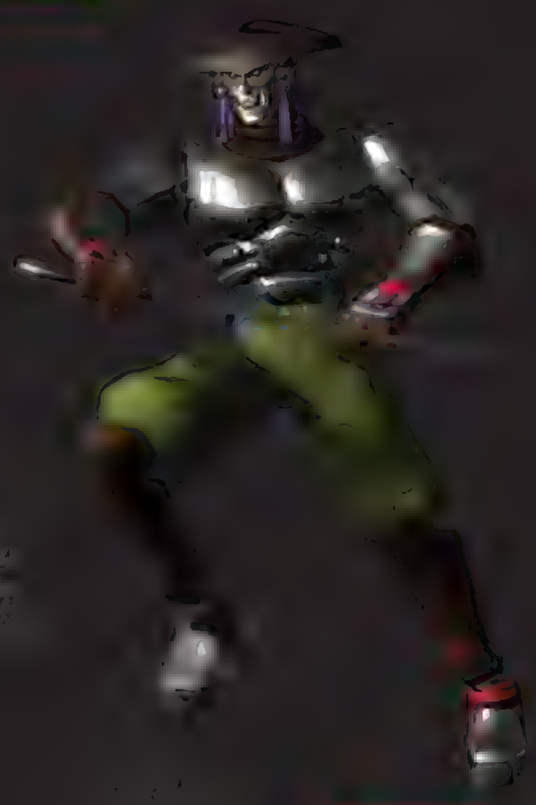




CHARACTER EVOLUTION



TEKKEN



TEKKEN 2



TEKKEN 3



TEKKEN 4



TEKKEN 5



TEKKEN 6







SIGNATURE MOVES



SWORD STAB



HARAKIRI



MOONSAULT SLAYER

BRYAN FURY



A savage fighter who uses a kickboxing fighting style. He's reported to have died twice and was somehow revived each time. He once belonged to an international police force, but Dr. Abel and Dr. Bosconovitch made him a replicant with a perpetual generator that keeps him alive.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: UNITED STATES
FIGHTING STYLE: KICKBOXING
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN 3*

BRYAN FURY IS a sadist. He revels in the pain of others, particularly when he's the one inflicting it.

Bryan's taste for violence and misery might have something to do with the fact that he's technically a zombie. In life, Bryan was an International Police Officer, shot to death in a Hong Kong shootout. His body was revived by Dr. Abel, Dr. Bosconovitch's enigmatic rival. But there was a catch. Not only was what remained of Bryan's human empathy filed down to a nub, but Bryan's reanimated body had a limited lifespan.

On the verge of a second death, Bryan was rescued by Yoshimitsu and taken to Dr. Bosconovitch, who outfitted him with a "perpetual power generator" – a device Dr. Bosconovitch should really consider licensing to Apple.

What Bryan lacks in internal complexity, he makes up for in fighting prowess. His kickboxing move set trades some of the speed and juggling ability of Hwoarang for some of the raw power of Paul Phoenix, a combination that has made Mr. Fury one of the most popular fighters in the competitive *Tekken* scene following his introduction in *Tekken 3*.

The American zombie rage monster could go by "Fury" alone, like Madonna, but having a first name is a subtle reminder that he was once human. Plus, it's funny.



I'M YOUR WORST NIGHTMARE.

SIGNATURE MOVES

JET UPPERCUT
MACH BREAKER



ROGER / ROGER JR.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: MISHIMA ZAIBATSU LAB
FIGHTING STYLE: COMMANDO WRESTLING
FIRST APPEARANCE: TEKKEN 2

ROGER MAY BE a genetically modified kangaroo created in Doctor Bosconovitch's lab, but don't let the boxing gloves fool you – he is not a boxer. He fights using "Commando Wrestling," which incorporates some of the heavy blows of trained boxers but with fewer rules. He does, after all, have a genetically enhanced mean streak.

After the events of *Tekken 2*, Roger was free. He eventually managed to find a wild kangaroo to be his wife (though it's unlikely she would have understood or agreed to the concept of traditional marriage). The two of them had Roger Jr.. Junior is the spitting image of his father, right down to the gloves, and fights along with his unnamed mother from inside her pouch. When Roger went missing, the mother-son duo fought their way across the world and into the Iron Fist Tournament in search of him.

But it turns out Doc Bosc had forgotten to engineer Roger with a sense of fatherly duty: he had abandoned his family to live the high life of a hyper-intelligent marsupial. He did eventually become a part of Junior's life, but his relationship with his wild wife never quite recoverd.

Roger and his labmate, Alex – a Dromaeosaurid dinosaur – both borrow fighting techniques from Armor King, though a direct link between them and the Mexican brawler is never established. In a nod to *Jurassic Park*, Alex was created with found dino DNA, filled in with genes from a kangaroo.



SIGNATURE MOVE

ANIMAL UPPERCUT



GIGAS

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: DATA DELETED
FIGHTING STYLE: DESTRUCTIVE IMPULSE
FIRST APPEARANCE: TEKKEN 7

THIS HULKING RED Gigas was once a man, before he was captured and experimented on, infused with DNA of other fighters. It's a scientific stretch—but of course, in *Tekken*, the Devil is in the details – and the DNA. The point is the result:in this case a fighter who is something between Jack without the processing power and Craig Marduk without the skin.

Gigas' strengths are offense, where his powerful moves can keep opponents at bay until it's too late. Though being rushed down by a monster of his size may steer opponents to a defensive approach, that's a tactical trick that plays right into Gigas' T-bone-sized hands. The better approach is to go on the offensive yourself, keeping Gigas off-balance and preventing him from pulling off his most devastating moves.

As a man, Gigas had been the adoptive father of Katarina Alves. When he faces his daughter in the ring, Gigas stopped just short of killing her, indicating there might still be a shred of humanity left in his weepy crimson exterior.



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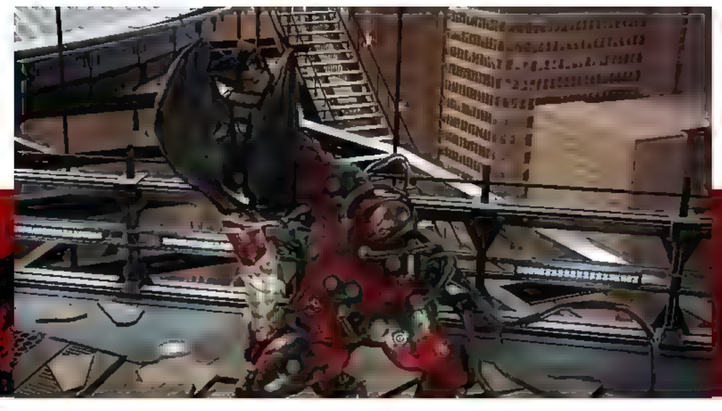


One of G Corporation's weapons divisions entered their latest biological weapon, Gigas, into the King of Iron Fist Tournament for two reasons: first, to pit the strength of their next-gen humanoid weapon against a similar weapon of G Corp's; and second, to provoke Heihachi Mishima.

Ironically, the first battle was staged on the rooftop of G Corp's own Millennium Tower, possibly in retaliation for their affront to Heihachi. Unmoved by the striking beauty of the skyscraper, Gigas awaited his victim.

SIGNATURE MOVE

OVERKILL



CLAUDIO SERAFINO

THIS IS NO PLACE FOR AMATEURS.

The Sirius Marksmen, a secret society of exorcists, has exerted a profound influence on European history for hundreds of years. The most powerful exorcist of the current generation is Claudio, who was visiting the Mishima Zaibatsu as their groups join forces to subdue a certain evil.

After sharing information on the targets, Kazuya Mishima and Jin Kazama, Claudio left the control room only to be confronted by a young girl. He was about to call the guards when she demanded to be taken to Jin. A plan sprung to Claudio's mind.

He led her to the roof, and with a grin
prepared to face her in combat.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: ITALY
FIGHTING STYLE: SIRIUS-STYLE PURIFICATION SORCERY
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN 7*



WHEN YOU THINK Italy, you think pasta. Wheels of parmesan cheese. Wine, Venice, seaside Mediterranean towns, and—if you haven't done much traveling in your life—adventuring plumbers. But what you may not know about Italy is that it's run by a shadowy cabal of exorcists known as the Archers of Sirius Marksmen. Claudio Serafino stepped out from the centuries old secret society and into *Tekken* 7, where he presumably felt immediately at home amongst the convoluted backstories and mysterious powers.

Claudio himself is neither serious nor an archer. His expertise is the exorcism of ancient evils—like Devils. He is also able to call upon the power of Sirius, a holy spirit of the brightest star in the sky, which glows in blue flame. Claudio keeps the spirit contained to his right arm, which is marked by tattered black fabric. Even that fashion faux pas manages to work with his custom tailored white outfit—yet another benefit of being a handsome Italian man with a great accent.

Sirius is commonly known as "The Dog Star" because of its prominence in its constellation Canis Major. Given that Claudio also has the power to subdue the Devil Gene, some speculate that the spirit may also have something to do with the Kazama Clan. Though the *Tag Tournament* spinoffs aren't canonical, they may hold the clue to that connection—in those games, Jun Kazama became Unknown when she was possessed by a wolf spirit.













SIGNATURE MOVE

SKY SLASH NOVA



ELIZA

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: UNKNOWN
FIGHTING STYLE: UNKNOWN
FIRST APPEARANCE: TEKKEN REVOLUTION



ELIZA INTENDED TO take a short nap, but woke up 600 years later to discover that her vampiric powers had all but vanished (except, evidently, immortality). In hopes of restoring her powers, she sets out to do as vampires do and consume the blood of victims. But it seemed that restoring her powers might take something more. Something... powerful.

Eliza sought out Claudio, whose Sirius Marksmen fought against her undead clan centuries before, and enters the Iron Fist Tournament, undead set on drinking blood strong enough to restore her vampiric vigor.

Eliza's fighting style is similar to Lillie's (in fact, it's possible that Lillie is Eliza's distant descendant), but she can also cast ethereal projectiles to keep enemies at bay like Akuma, the only other character with this ability.

Of course, Eliza is also a vampire. Several of her grapples and Rage Arts allow Eliza to suck the blood of her enemy and drain their life meter.

Eliza was only supposed to take a short nap, but she ended up sleeping for 600 years. Upon awakening, she found her powers as a vampire had faded to nothing. In an attempt to restore her strength, she consumed the blood of several victims. However, it wasn't enough.

What she needed was the blood of someone with an intense spiritual force? Maybe then she would return to peak condition. But did such a person even exist in this era? No-one sprang to mind.

Left with no other choice, Eliza headed for the old HQ of the clan of exorcists who had caused her no end of trouble when she last prowled the nights. Perhaps some of their descendants were still alive.





Eliza entered the ring as the first original character of *Tekken Revolution* after a fan vote held at San Diego Comic Con in 2013. Here were the other choices, as laid out by Harada himself:

SEXY FEMALE TEKKEN FORCE CHARACTER

A gorgeous and sexy female Tekken Force member, she is loyal to the Mishima Zaibatsu, regardless its leadership.

The original concept was proposed for *Tekken 5*, but the clothing was too revealing and the concept was scrapped for fears that the game's rating would increase. The concept surfaced again for *Tekken 6* but once again failed to make the final cut.

There were several martial arts proposed for this character, including Silat, Krav Maga, Savate, Taekkyeon, Systema, and Escrima.

SYAKE/SALMON

A salmon. Just a salmon.

Originally planned for *Tekken* 3, punch buttons would cause the Salmon to flop around, and the kick buttons would make it release eggs. However, arcades were still popular worldwide, and charging 100 yen (1 USD) per play with such a character was likely to be a problem.

If the *Tekken* 3 arcade board is hacked, you will notice that the character's name remains in placeholder data.

FEMALE VAMPIRE

(A YOUNG GIRL, LONG IMPRISONED BY THE ROCHEFORT FAMILY)

A young female vampire that has been imprisoned in a wing of the Rochefort Estate, where Lili was raised.

She has a dark personality, but her gothic attire and uncanny beauty are mesmerizing. During development of *Tekken* 6, she was proposed as a character that used an actual martial art, but also wielded fireballs.

However, during development, many members of the team got married or gave birth to children around the same time. As a result, not many staff were left to complete the character, and she was discarded. The concept was salvaged again during *Tekken* 6 BR, but the same phenomenon occurred again and Harada locked the concept away in a safe, wanting to keep it secured within the development team since it seems to bring them good fortune.

A SALMON.
JUST A SALMON.



SHIN KAMIYA

A classmate of Jin Kazama who appeared in the 3-D CG movie *Tekken Blood Vengeance*.

The facts that Shin's implementation would impact the main story line, that he died in the movie, and that he doesn't know any martial arts all make him a difficult character to include in the game.

TOUGOU

A fellow *Tekken* Force member and friend of Lars Alexandersson, Tougou joined Lars in the coup against the Mishima Zaibatsu.

Tougou appears in Scenario Campaign in *Tekken 6*. His fighting style is similar to Lars's, but Tougou also uses the sword on his waist for certain attacks. He could also call in air strikes via his radio.

Since Tougou died in the game, he was never implemented as a playable character.

ZOMBIE BRIDE

A zombie bride-to-be in a wedding dress.

The idea first came up around *Tekken* 3 for the first fighting zombie in a game. The idea resurfaced again for *Tekken 6*, as the sister of Miguel, who could be called as an air strike and came back to life.

FEMALE PAUL

For some inexplicable reason, Paul is transformed into a very cute girl. The concept was thrown out immediately.

GIANT PRAYING MANTIS

During development of *Tekken* 3, a bug caused the joints of a character to move backwards, deforming the character model. It looked like it would be a strong fighter, so there was a brief plan to actually implement it, but the idea was discarded for lack of development time.

As with Syake/Salmon, the Insect blank data can be found when the *Tekken* 3 arcade board is hacked.

AVERAGE, RUN-OF-THE-MILL OLD MAN

You average old man, like the one you find in almost any neighborhood. He is not a martial artist, so he is pretty weak.

It was an idea mentioned early in the series, and thrown out the instant it was mentioned.

GANMI-CHAN

A teenage female Sumo wrestler who idolizes Ganryu. The original idea was proposed for *Tag* 2, but was discarded in order to focus on increasing the popularity of Ganryu.

A character sketch was completed several years later.

NINA WILLIAMS

YOU'VE GOT A DATE WITH DEATH.

After failing to apprehend Jin Kazama, Nina Williams decided it was time for her and the Mishima Zaibatsu to go their separate ways. On her first private assassination job, she was tasked with infiltrating a mafia wedding... posing as the bride!

During the ceremony, a firefight broke out where Nina took out all her targets. However, the commotion had attracted the Tekken Force, who had been dispatched to suppress the violence, and they gave chase. With the Tekken Force in hot pursuit, Nina made her escape.

That's when she bumped into a man she found vaguely familiar. The man wouldn't leave her alone. He seemed to have something he wanted to say to her... Nina decided that a confrontation was her best chance of escape.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: IRELAND
FIGHTING STYLE: ASSASSINATION ARTS
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN*



NINA WILLIAMS' VERY existence is political. Nina is from Ireland. In *Tekken 2*, it was revealed that Nina's father was once an assassin for the Irish Republican Army, a paramilitary group that believe Northern Ireland should be an independent republic, free of British control and influence. To achieve that end, the IRA are known for engaging in violent acts, including the killing of civilians and public bombings.

At the time of the original *Tekken*'s development, the IRA were particularly active, carrying out bombings in nearly every year for the two preceding decades.

It was also revealed in *Tekken 2* that Nina's father had broken from the IRA and gone into hiding after having a child with a British woman. This makes Nina a living personification of the very unity the IRA opposes.

In a game dripping with allegories of war, and shaped by World War II's influence, there is actually very little direct mention of real-world conflicts. Heihachi and the Zaibatsu are merely representative of wartime Japan. Whether or not the *Tekken* timeline had a World War II of its own is never made clear. The choice to include the IRA in Nina's backstory is a break from how *Tekken* otherwise approaches politics.

Unfortunately, Nina is controversial for other reasons, too. For example, although Nina is a cold-blooded assassin, her ending in *Tekken* involves an argument with her sister Anna over a missing high heel.

Then, in the time jump between *Tekken* 2 and *Tekken* 3, whereas most of the other fighters merely aged up or were replaced by youthful counterparts, Anna and Nina were frozen for fifteen years. An interesting sci-fi twist... and an excuse to keep the Williams sisters young and beautiful.

It gets worse from there. While frozen, Anna and Nina were experimented upon. One of these experiments involved removing an egg from



CHARACTER EVOLUTION



TEKKEN



TEKKEN 2



TEKKEN 3

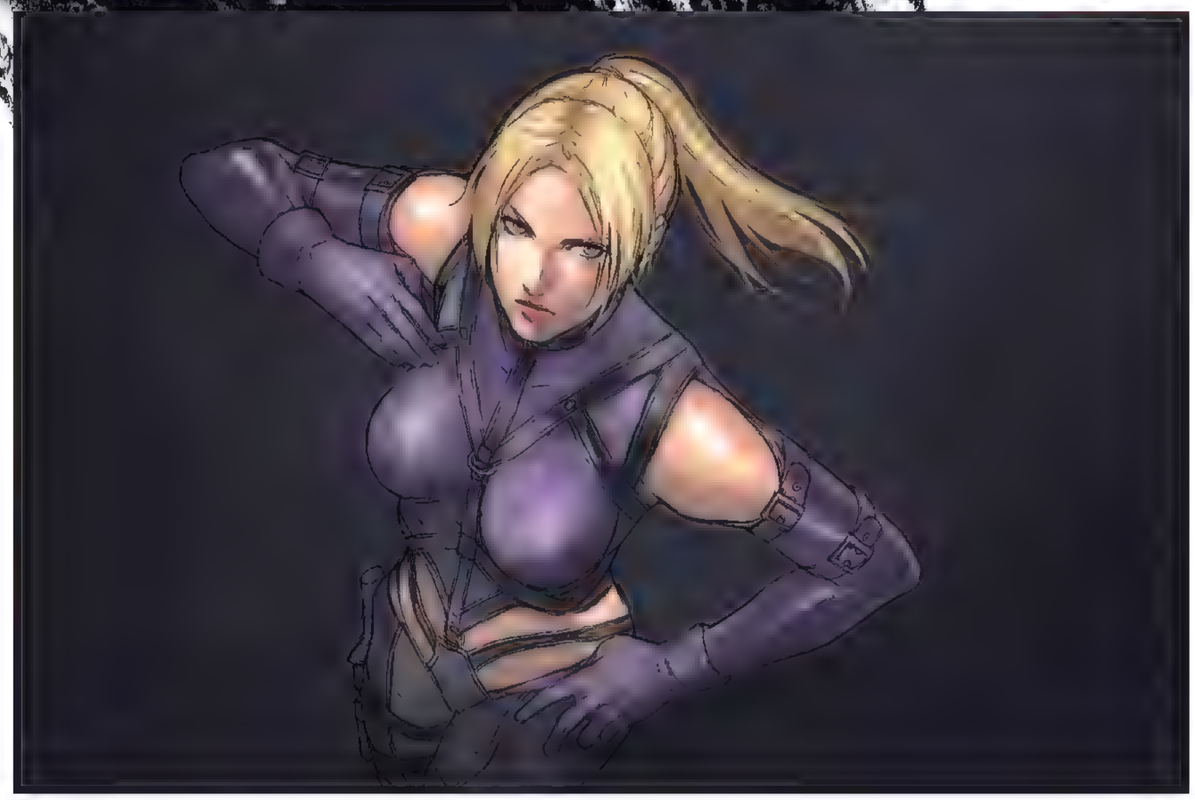


TEKKEN 5



TEKKEN 6









Nina, which was later used to create Steve Fox. It's a troubling violation, to say the least. And even if that's part of the idea – to add to the emotional wallop of waking up under unknown circumstances fifteen years later and being forced to pick up the pieces – it's a well-worn trope amongst deadly women in fiction. For some recent examples, see Black Widow from *Avengers: Age of Ultron,* for which writer and director Joss Whedon received an appropriate amount of backlash, and Beatrix Kiddo from *Kill Bill*. Nina even wears a tattered wedding dress as an alternate costume in *Tekken 7*!

The idea behind the trope is essentially an argument that a woman cannot be both deadly *and* a maternal: that somehow those two characteristics are inversely proportional; and that having children, or even the idea of having children, represents emotional weakness in her otherwise cold, unfeeling approach to life and death.







DEATH BY DEGREES

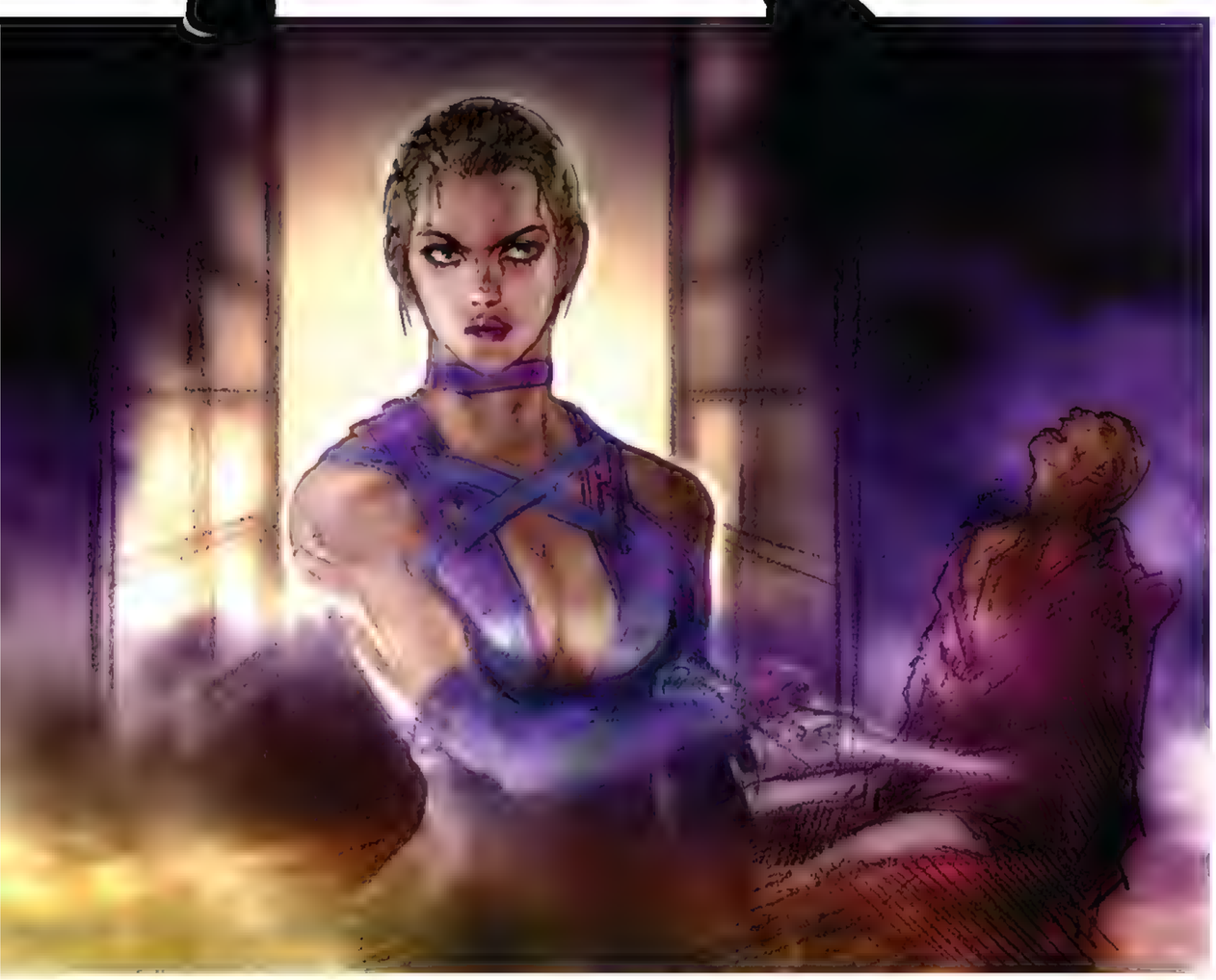




THE COMPLICATED CONTRADICTIONS of Nina Williams were apparently too much for *Tekken* to contain. As a result, Nina is one of the only *Tekken* characters with her own spinoff. *Death by Degrees* is an action game that dives into her backstory and provides a vehicle for Nina to exercise talents that are otherwise reserved for *Tekken*'s rendered cutscenes.

Despite mixed reviews, *Death by Degrees* was an exciting test of the *Tekken*verse's boundaries. The game, originally announced with the title *Nina*, is played with only the PlayStation 2 controller analog sticks. Nina's preferred method of covert ops is to break the bones of anyone who would cross her path. Upon completion, players can unlock "Anna Mode," allowing them to shatter femurs as Nina's kid sister. And as an extra nod to *Tekken* fans, one of Nina's many unlockable outfits is "*Tekken 2* Nina," which changes the player character to the original low-res Nina that appeared in *Tekken 2*.

It's perhaps not a coincidence that *Death by Degrees* was released in 2005, just after Quentin Tarantino's popular *Kill Bill* films starring Uma Thurman as a deadly blonde assassin on a warpath of revenge after waking from a coma to find that her baby had been taken from her.







SIGNATURE MOVES



BLONDE BOMB

BACKHAND SLAP

ELBOW SMASH

JAB ROUNDHOUSE



IVORY CUTTER

POWER CHARGE

ANNA WILLIAMS



COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: IRELAND
FIGHTING STYLE: ASSASSINATION ARTS
FIRST APPEARANCE: *TEKKEN*

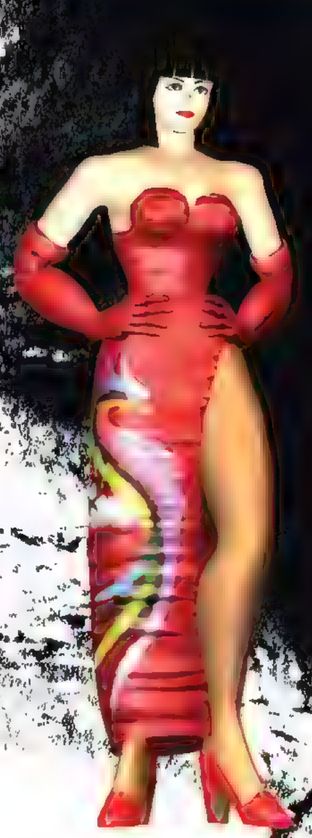
DESPITE HER OLDER sister's platinum blonde hair, Anna is a brunette, probably because it was the easiest way to differentiate them using rudimentary PlayStation graphics.

Anna is further differentiated from her sister by her playful personality. She is nevertheless Nina's equal as a killer and assassin. Their sibling rivalry stretches back (as it does with most kids) to their parents. While their father trained Nina personally, he neglected Anna. She instead learned Aikido from their mother and parlayed her inferiority complex into murderous prowess.

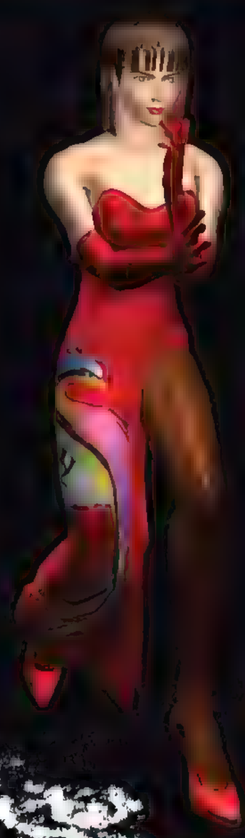
However, when Nina was captured by Kazuya's Mishima Zaibatsu and forced into cryosleep, Anna volunteered to be frozen alongside her.



CHARACTER EVOLUTION



TEKKEN



TEKKEN 2



TEKKEN 3



TEKKEN 5



TEKKEN 6









ANNA WILLIAMS

TRY SHOWING ME A GOOD TIME.



SIGNATURE MOVES

CHAOS JUDGEMENT

APHRODITE'S SCORN

HUNTING SWAN

BLONDE BOMB

SERGEI DRAGUNOV



Sergei Dragunov entered the King of Iron Fist Tournament on army orders. At the designated arena of his first match, a woman appeared before him. There was something strangely familiar about her...

It didn't take Dragunov long to figure out who she was, and he wasted no time in readying himself for combat.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: RUSSIA
FIGHTING STYLE: COMMANDO SAMBO
FIRST APPEARANCE: TEKKEN 5: DARK RESURRECTION

THE RUSSIAN SPEC Ops "White Angel of Death" might not look like much of a dancer, but he cuts a mean sambo. That's S.A.M.B.O., an acronym of SAMozashchita Bez Oruzhiya, Russian for "self-defense without weapons" – not to be confused with *samba*, the popular form of Brazilian dance. The point is: Sergei is not a dancer, and he is definitely trying to kill you.

SAMBO was developed in Russia in the 1920s and taught to the Soviet Red Army as a devastating means of hand-to-hand combat. In incorporates a variety of fighting styles, favoring vicious blows to sensitive areas designed to incapacitate opponents and break limbs. Vasili Oshchepkov, one of the fathers of SAMBO, studied Judo in Japan for two years. He was later accused of being a Japanese spy and died in a Soviet prison.

Sergei Dragunov means to return the favor.

Sergei is unflinchingly loyal, only as evil or righteous as his orders. He's the hyper-efficient Russian anti-G.I. Joe that was the stuff of Cold War nightmares.

In *Tekken 6*, civil unrest had swept across Russia, caused by a tactical misinformation campaign mounted by the Mishima Zaibatsu, then run by Jin. Russia dispatched Dragunov to Japan to destroy the Zaibatsu from the inside out.

Sergei's powerful techniques have made him one of the more popular recent additions to *Tekken* tournament play. He's a terrifying opponent, and not just because he doesn't speak. Or because of his dark, sunken eyes. Or even because he's named after two Russian gun designers.

He'd probably even be terrifying if he danced.

SERGEI DRAGUNOV



SIGNATURE MOVES

RAZER
RUSSIAN ASSAULT



RAVEN

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: UNKNOWN
FIGHTING STYLE: NINJUTSU
FIRST APPEARANCE: TEKKEN 5

CLAD IN BLACK and skilled in the art of ninjutsu, Raven is Blade for the Devil Gene set. Trouble is, being a ninja puts only a partial emphasis on hand-to-hand combat. Ninjutsu much more about stealth, evasion, and covert retrievals. As a result, Raven is flashy in cutscenes but difficult to control in combat.

It was later learned that Raven worked for the United Nations as an intelligence agent. Unfortunately, he likely won't enjoy the fruits of his many missions – at least not without some Doctor Bosconovitch magic. In a *Tekken 7* flashback, Raven and his men are seen transporting Jin when he transforms into Devil and takes down their helicopter.

Raven's evasive capabilities make him a primarily defensive character. Though his reversals and parries rival those of any character in the game, his offensive moves often leave him open to punishment.





MASTER RAVEN

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: UNKNOWN
FIGHTING STYLE: NINJUTSU
FIRST APPEARANCE: TEKKEN 7: FATED RETRIBUTION

THE OFT-ALLUDED-TO SUPERIOR of Raven, Master Raven made her debut in *Tekken 7*. Other than shifting the ratio of male and female characters, she's similar to her subordinate in style and substance. Except – and this is where the "Master" part comes in – she's better.

As the first character since Yoshimitsu to come equipped with swords, and first character in the series with realistic Black hair (sorry, Eddy), Master Raven is visually dazzling on the battlefield: flipping and flying with the grace of a ninja, swords and techsuit glinting against the camera, long black and blonde dreadlocks trailing behind her like streamers of death.

Though not many top level fighters have had the courage to try Master Raven on a big stage, she was quickly regarded as a step up from her predecessor thanks to the added range of her swords. Plus, she can teleport.



As an agent for the UN's intelligence bureau, Master Raven embarked on her latest top-secret mission: Infiltrate the King of Iron Fist Tournament and confront her assigned target.

In the frozen area that was to be her battleground, Master Raven stood, arms folded, face to face with her subordinate's sworn enemy, who simply narrowed his eyes and took up a fighting pose.



NEW FANS NEW CHALLENGES



OF ALL THE depth and details that made *Tekken 3* one of the most indispensible fighting games of all time, the most endearing was a tiny dinosaur named Gon. Gon was the protagonist of a weekly manga strip by Masashi Tanaka. He could be unlocked by defeating him in *Tekken Ball* mode, or by achieving a high score in Survival mode and inputting the name "GON."

Gon wasn't canonical, or very practical, but he certainly was fun. Lining up across from Jin Kazama as a stubby-armed, three-foot-nothing dinosaur was worth the imbalance. It was yet another example of *Tekken*'s sense of humor.

Flash forward 20 years, and unlockable guest characters have become the perfect products for gaming's DLC (downloadable content) marketplace. *Tekken 7* launched with Akuma, of *Street Fighter* fame; and has since offered up Geese Howard of *Fatal Fury* and Noctis Lucis Caelum of *Final Fantasy XV* as downloadable guest characters. Akuma even gets his own role in *Tekken*'s story.

Offering crossover characters is not only fun—it's a good way to attract fans of other games and attract current *Tekken* fans to other franchises. But it's more challenging than it looks.

"We created the character from scratch, so all the character modeling, the animations, everything, we did on our own," Harada told Gamespot in a 2017 interview. "And also, when taking new characters and putting them into our game, obviously, the Tekken characters have a lot of techniques, a hundred or so on average per character. The 2-D fighters, they have their very famous techniques that we implement first, but then we have to also fill out the rest of their technique list with moves to mesh them well with the Tekken. Even before we get to the balancing part of the development, this section alone is quite the priority."

And that's only after all the complicated legal stuff has been worked out.

"There might be a certain character that we would want to do that maybe the person on the other end, the other company and their licensors, might not be on board. Or it could be something that the fighting game community would really like to see, but that particular IP owner wouldn't sign off on being in *Tekken*," Harada says.

Sometimes obtaining the rights is simply a matter of a relationship. Gon, for example, had made his video game debut in a Super Famicom game published by Bandai—years before Bandai and Namco had merged. In the case of Akuma, Harada's relationship with *Street Fighter* series producer Yoshinori Ono stretches back decades, culminating in the crossover game *Street Fighter X Tekken*.



For Harada, crossover characters aren't just a novelty. They're for the good of the genre.

"A lot of times, the point is not to try to take the fans from the respective IP and bring them into *Tekken*. It's more, by adding that IP if fighting games as a whole kind of become more exciting, and you attract a newer audience that wouldn't have bought either game in the first place because it's so exciting, and that's really what we're trying to achieve from a marketing goal, especially," Harada says.

AKUMA

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: JAPAN
FIGHTING STYLE: SATSUI NO HADO
FIRST APPEARANCE: TEKKEN 7

OF ALL *STREET FIGHTER'S* characters, Akuma is the most appropriate fit for the darker *Tekken* universe. For starters, his name literally means "Devil."

Akuma descended upon the Mishima dojo to deliver a message to Heihachi: Akuma was honorbound by Heihachi's deceased wife, Kazumi Mishima, to kill him and his son Kazuya. When Heihachi asked why he waited so long, Akuma cryptically replied, "I first had to secure the rights."

Okay, what Akuma *really* told Heihachi was that Akuma was waiting for Heihachi to grow stronger – a vicious taunt he backed up in their ensuing battle. Akuma appeared to succeed in killing Heihachi, leaving the dojo in ruins.

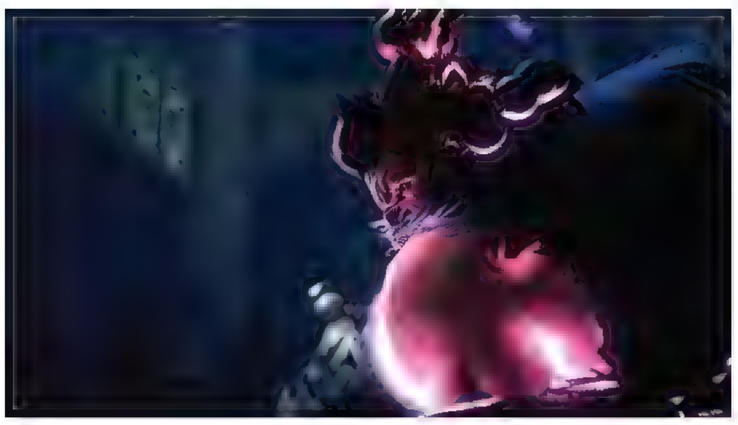
Heihachi's encounter with Akuma reflects the experience of *Tekken 7* players. Between his long-distance projectiles and his ability to leap at his opponents in the style of 2-D fighting games, Akuma proved to be a powerful new character. Since his debut, he has been the subject of many tweaks and balance changes that leave him – though still very strong – balanced with the rest of the roster. And as if to echo those changes, players later learned that Heihachi had survived their epic duel.

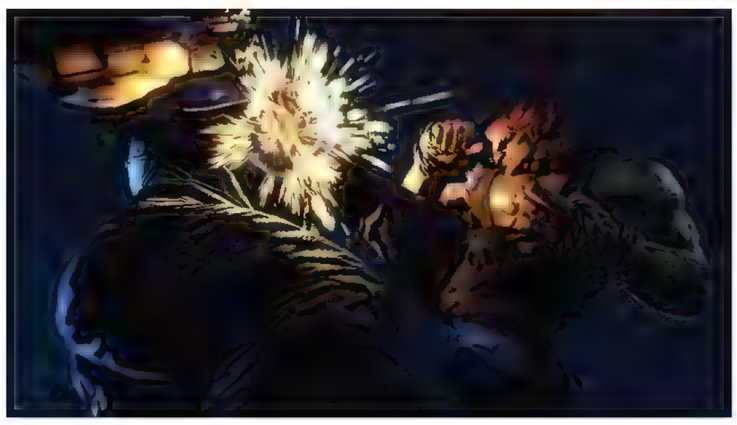
When Akuma sought out Kazuya, he forced the younger Mishima into his Devil form. The result of their battle – as well as the nature of Akuma's relationship with Kazumi, and the source of her request to have her husband and son killed – is left unknown. But money says it has something to do with a bet Ono-san lost to Harada.



CAN YOU WITHSTAND MY POWER?

A mysterious fighter... a demon. He finds himself in the middle of the Mishima blood feud by a pre-existing relationship with Kazumi, Hehiachi's wife. He makes his debut in TEKKEN 7 promising to fulfill a debt owed to Kazumi.







ROUND 2: READY... FIGHT!

TEKKEN 6

NEW SYSTEM, OLD GUARD



THE RELEASE OF *Tekken 5* marked a decade of *Tekken*, but the fighting-game landscape had changed.

Outside of Japan, arcades were all but dead. *Tekken 5*'s expansion, *Dark Resurrection* (known as "DR" to fans), would be the series' last worldwide cabinet release. The console market had supplanted arcades as the primary means of release. Though *Tekken* games would continue to be released in arcades first, those arcade releases were more like beta tests than ever before.

The so-called golden age of fighting games was also over. Where there once had been dozens of titles competing for a large share of the video game market, there were now only a few vying for a share that was much smaller. With few exceptions, the success of *Tekken* and *Soulcalibur* meant Namco was its own biggest competitor.

Even *Street Fighter*, the perceived leader of the genre, went almost a decade between sequels: *Street Fighter EX3*, which was released in 2000, and *Street Fighter IV*, released in 2008. *Tekken*, on the other hand, released four games in that span, including *DR*. Despite Harada's brief departure, Tekken Project simply never stopped.

Tekken was the top name in fighting games. And among fighting game fans, Harada, too, had become a household name. Even in his own home. In the lead-up to *Tekken 5*, Harada was featured on the cover of *Monthly Arcadia*, a Japanese gaming magazine. His parents saw the cover on the magazine rack and gave their son a phone call.

When Harada had first started working at Namco over 12 years earlier, he had known his parents wouldn't approve of a career in video games. So he had hidden it from them. And the opportunity to tell them the truth... never really presented itself. At least by then, his success spoke for itself. He was on the cover of a magazine, after all.

Harada has a personal connection to *Tekken 6*.

"If *3* was to destroy everything you've done and start again, *6* was to take everything we had done from *3*, *4*, *5*, and *Tag 1*, and make something even greater on top of that. So that kind of reflects the number of modes that were included, the roster, and the depth of customization. That was better than anything we had done up until then," Harada says.

He clarifies that, "It's not that I think the game itself is the best. It's just that I was the most involved – I had the biggest influence on [*Tekken 3* and *6*]".

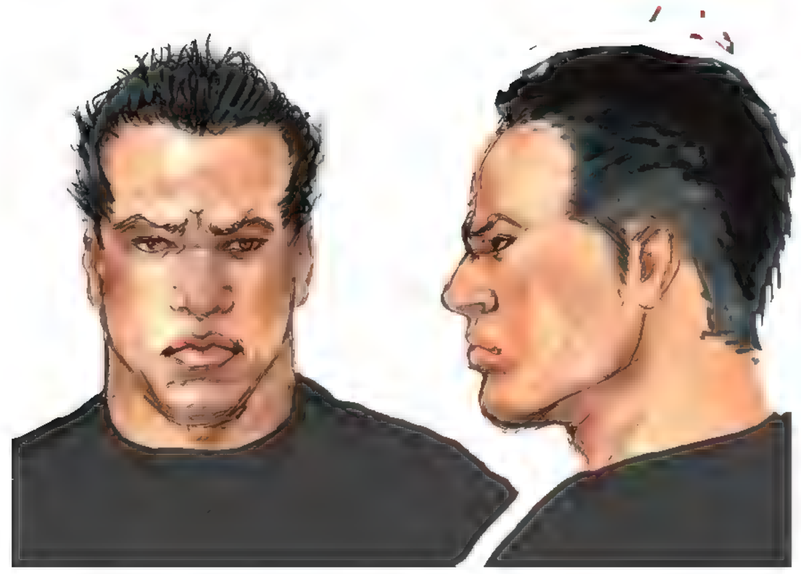
Tekken 6 was another opportunity for a technological leap for the series. During development, Sony would release the PlayStation 3; and once again, the team would have to choose between selling to more customers on a dated console and delaying a release to remain at the technological forefront. And once again, though *6* wouldn't be ready in time for the PS3 launch, the choice was easy.

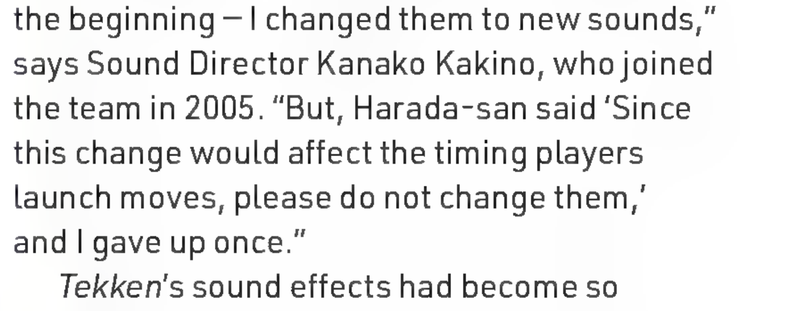
Now, though, *Tekken*'s long history was both an asset and a challenge. The past provided a foundation and a roadmap for the future, but it


TEKKEN 6
BLOODLINE REBELLION

Exclusive artwork for an UK's magazine cover









also meant some series-long hallmarks were beginning to show their age. Sound effects, for example, were beginning to sound dated.

"When I joined Tekken Project, since the basic hit sounds were old – they had been used since the beginning – I changed them to new sounds," says Sound Director Kanako Kakino, who joined the team in 2005. "But, Harada-san said 'Since this change would affect the timing players launch moves, please do not change them,' and I gave up once."

Tekken's sound effects had become so ingrained that they were about more than nostalgia or aesthetics. Their timing was a cue for players. Whether they realized it or not, the right counter or the right sidestep could be timed by the sound of a move. Changing the sounds would change the game itself.

Still, PlayStation-era sounds on DTS and Dolby 5.1-capable hardware hardly felt appropriate. Kakino tried again.

She knew the sounds couldn't be replaced, but they could be upgraded. She took care to recreate the classic sounds as accurately as possible while upgrading them.

"After that, I've kept making small adjustments, adding new effect sounds and those that are now used for the series," Kakino says.

The team added more to its character customization features, popular in *Tekken 5*, and continued to refine the interactive elements





of its arenas. They also added two key new systems to combat: bound and rage.

The bound system gave each fighter moves that, if used at the right time during a juggle, would smash their opponent against the ground and bounce them back up, making them vulnerable to additional combos.

The rage system gave fighters a damage boost when their health reached a critical level. An opponent's glowing health meter meant they were close to finished, but it also meant a dramatic comeback was more possible than ever.

Fans loved the deepened yet familiar gameplay. Though *Street Fighter IV* would be released in the same year, the two games were met with fanfare in different keys. *SFIV* was the comeback – the long-awaited follow-up for the old-school 2-D fighter fan. *Tekken 6* was the next punch in a relentless combo – the go-to of a new generation of fighter fan who had only ever known a world where *Tekken* was king.

Despite selling to a relatively small player base of new PS3 console owners, *Tekken 6* sold exceptionally well. And it was a good thing it did. It was the first *Tekken* game release under the banner of its new company: Namco Bandai.

Though in America, Bandai is mostly known for Power Rangers and Tamagotchi, it is Japan's most profitable toymaker. The growth of online retail was a threat to Bandai's continued financial success – just as the shrinking arcade game space was to Namco. Though known in America for *Tekken*, *Pac-Man*, and a host of other games, Namco still relied on the arcades it owned and the cabinets it could sell. The two companies saw one another as kindred spirits – and as an opportunity to adapt to a changing marketplace.

In a joint statement, the companies explained the rationale for the merger:

"In the entertainment industry worldwide, global competition has intensified as technological innovations spur the expansion and widespread penetration of information technology networks. In addition, in the domestic Japanese market, the number of children has been decreasing due to declining birth rates, and people's hobbies and interests have diversified. In order to continue to secure sustained profits, we believe we must win customers by aggressively promoting research and development and creating and providing attractive products and services.

"The [new enterprise] will integrate and mutually complement Bandai's strengths in character merchandising and Namco's strengths in game content – as well as its game development capability and its vast network of amusement facilities – with the goal of developing synergies in the entertainment industry. In the medium and long term, we aim to establish a new business model to enable us to succeed amidst global competition."

For the *Tekken* team, the change signaled an end to the somewhat "loose" internal culture to which they had become accustomed.

"There wasn't a whole lot of management, the company didn't really oversee it that much. It was actually kind of a venture project. So we've always pretty much had control over it," Harada says. A merger of this magnitude meant development would be more closely monitored, that profit margins were more important than ever, and that a more corporate culture would soon become the norm.

But it also meant – and this is the part they cared about most – that *Tekken* would continue for years to come.







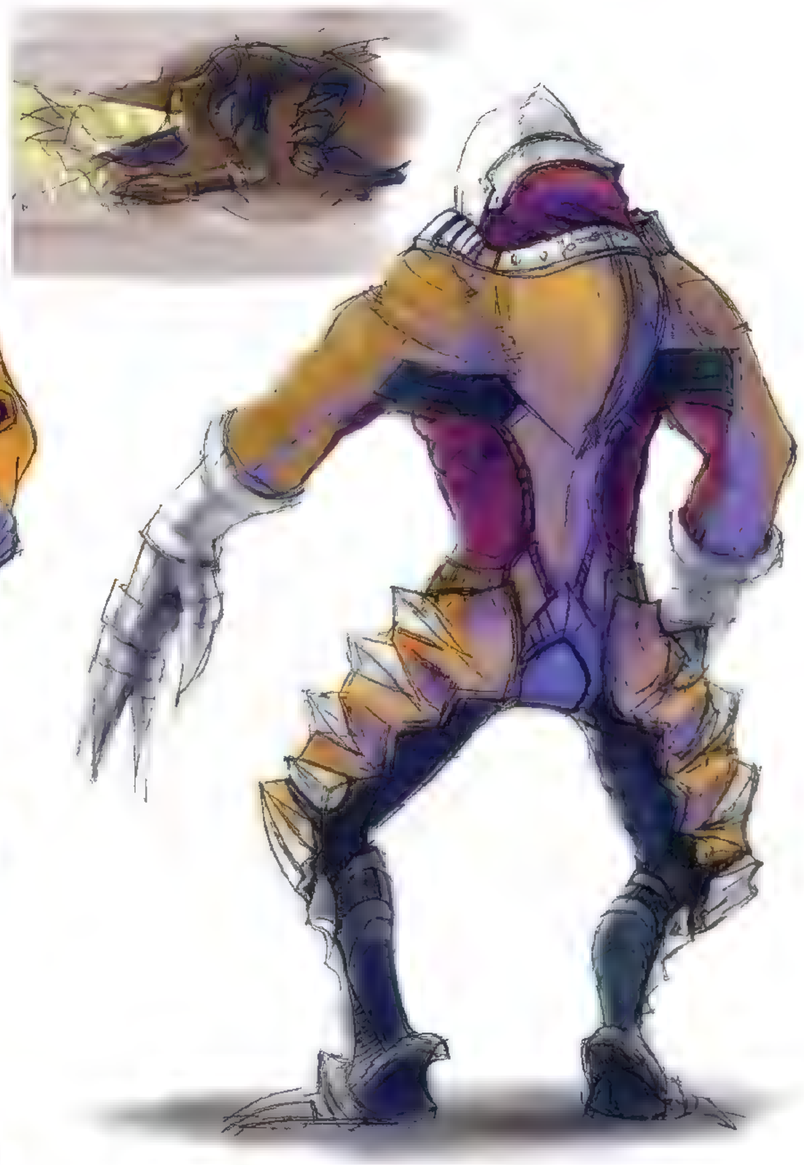




















TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT 2

EXPONENTIAL COMPLEXITY DOESN'T LEAD TO EXPONENTIAL SUCCESS

"**AFTER *6*, WE WERE** thinking what to do," Michael Murray says. "And a lot of fan feedback was that they wanted another *Tag Tournament*. And we thought, okay. It's a good time."

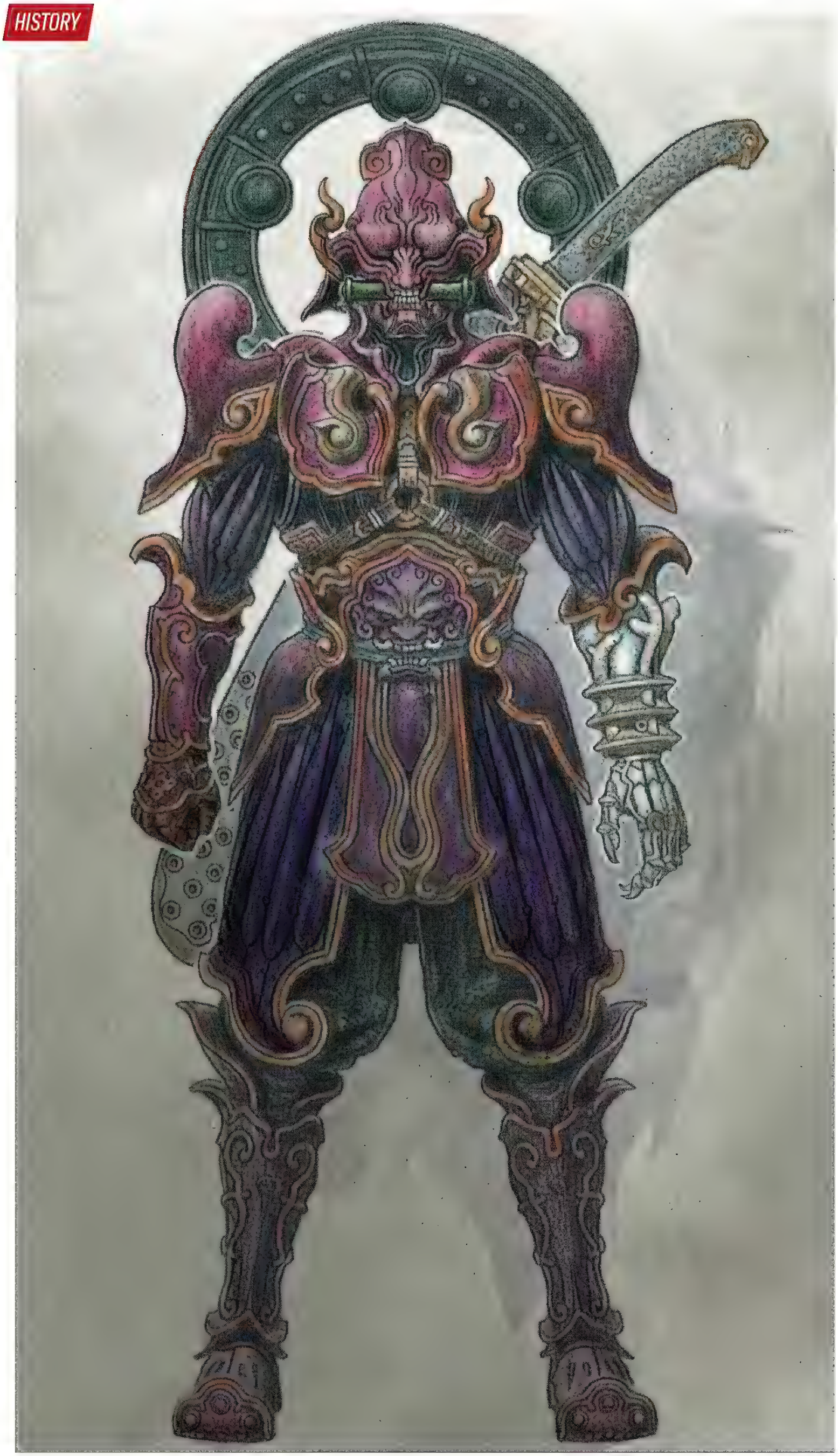
It had been nearly a decade since the release of the first *Tag*. Like the upcoming project, that game had been preceded by three games from the core series, during which the team had refined and improved the one-on-one gameplay. It was a good time for a *Tag* follow up, but for the team, it was also time for a new challenge.

One of the biggest challenges of *Tag 1* was its expansive roster. *Tekken 6* would aid the team this time around, as many of the character models had already been rendered for the PlayStation 3.

"Any character fans were asking for, Harada put in the game. He was like—I don't want to hear any complaints of, 'So-and-so character is missing!'" Murray recalls. "So it was, whether it was Jun Kazama or Angel or some of these other characters we hadn't seen for a while, they were in. Even character skins. It was the biggest roster we'd ever had."

The concept of *Tekken Tag Tournament 2* was a *matsuri*—the Japanese word for festival. It would be a celebration of all things *Tekken*, stretching back to *Tag 1* and back again to the series' origins. To round out the roster, character designer Kousuke Waki (who worked his way up through the team starting with *Tekken 5*) said he was influenced by the style of Zack Snyder's movies.


TEKKEN
TAG2
TOURNAMENT











The parallels are easy to see. Like Snyder's films, *Tekken* had developed an aesthetic not of photo-realism, but of hyper realism: exaggerated musculature with oversaturated color that showed the depth of every deltoid.

Even with the head start provided by the *Tekken 6* character models, a roster of almost 60 was a steep undertaking. Not to be outdone, the *Tag* gameplay also provided the challenge the team had been craving.

"You could choose Solo or Tag as a mechanic. Solo, meaning I could choose Paul Phoenix only, and I could go up against your Devil Jin and Kazuya. And still theoretically have a good match even if there's one against two, because parameters like health and damage were adjusted accordingly," Murray says. "And at the same time, there's all the mechanics added on top of that. Like the tag combos or the move that you can use to interrupt your opponent's attack where your partner jumps on screen, and how this happens when you're at the wall or you're doing a wall combo, etc."

There was a lot to account for.

For Murray, it was worth the effort. "It's one of my favorites of the series. I actually liked it better than *7* for quite a long time," he says.

But something happened after release that Murray, Harada and the rest of the team hadn't anticipated.

"The fan base increased quite a bit with *Tekken 6*. It was quite popular because of the basic gameplay and a lot of the modes that came out on the console version were popular as well. So a lot of the people at the end of *Tekken 6* hadn't actually played *Tekken Tag Tournament 1*. We didn't know this at the time. So they were used to using only one character usually: Their favorite. And granted I'm not talking about the people who go to tournaments and all that, we're talking about just your average gamer."

This meant that no matter how many characters were offered, most *Tekken 5* and *6* players were proficient with only one of them. And for whatever reason, *Tag 2* players felt that Solo mode wasn't viable. It was a tag game, after all. But this attitude meant double the characters, which meant double the learning curve – and it only got steeper from there.

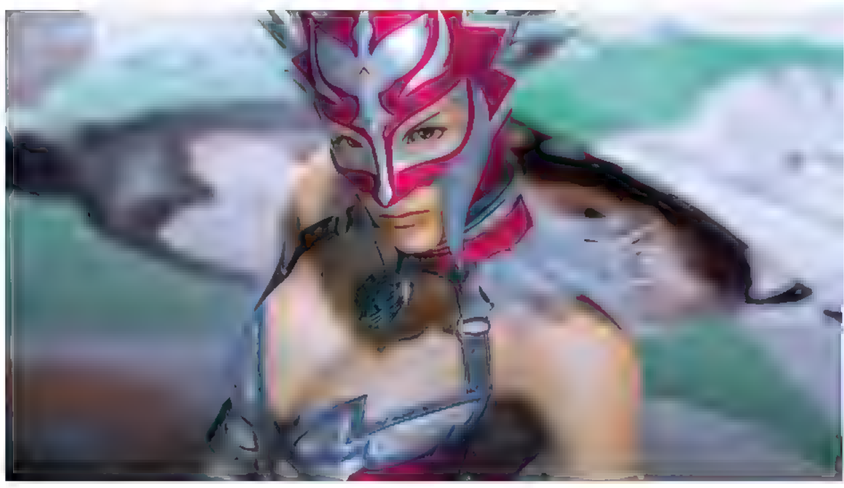
The fans, it turned out, did not relish in learning the many intricate nuances of the game as much as the team enjoyed creating them.

"There's just so much to learn about the game. Because even if you have one character there's still so much to learn about the game – getting up off the ground, wall combos, move properties, sidestepping, there's just so much to learn about the base game, there was just too much when we added the tag mechanic. There were just so many









gameplay mechanics geared toward the hardcore *Tekken* fans, that I think it was off-putting to some newcomers of the series, and also people who didn't play *Tag 1*," Murray says.

"And because we spent so many resources on that main portion of the game there weren't as many side modes as we'd had throughout the series comparatively," he says. Side modes were a feature that console players – now a vast majority of the *Tekken* audience – had come to expect, and one that kept them coming back to the game.

Inside Bandai Namco, the team knew they had made a terrific game. The veterans of the team loved it. Their most dedicated fans loved it. *Famitsu*, Japan's preeminent gaming magazine, gave *Tag 2* its highest rating of the series – a 39 out of 40.

"The people who love the game really love it, but it just wasn't a widely selling game," Murray says. "And with the scope of development of a game like *Tekken*, you really have to sell to a wide audience."

The lower-than-expected sales of the game weren't a devastating blow, but they were a learning experience. The weight of the brand and the company's bottom line mattered more than all else – even the quality of the game itself. Mass appeal *was* a quality, and it was missing from *Tag 2*.

"That was disappointing," Murray says of the game's sales. But when the team looked toward the future of the franchise, they were forced to take a step back. "What made the game popular for *Tekken 3*? *Tekken 5*? Or *Tekken 6* even. All of the elements and things we learned from *Tag 2* kind of formed the basis for our decisions for Tekken 7," Murray says. Even, or perhaps especially, the things that didn't stick.

"And so far in hindsight it looks like it proved to be the right direction."

IRON FIST WORLD TOUR

A ONE-MAN DOCUMENTARY CREW HERALDS THE NEW ERA OF TEKKEN



IN 2016, ***TEKKEN 7*** was coming to America, and Bandai-Namco intended to give it a rollout fit for a king.

They announced The King of Iron Fist Tournament, an 18-event competition that spanned America and Canada, from coast to coast. Top finishers from each event would qualify for the North American Finals in San Francisco, with a trip to the World Finals in Tokyo on the line.

Though *Tekken 7* and its expansion, *Fated Retribution*, had already been released in arcades in Japan, and there had been a smaller King of Iron First Tournament in 2015, the worldwide console release was still over a year away. And because of the ailing state of the arcade scene in the West, *Tekken 7* didn't see a western arcade release.

The 2016 tournament would be *Tekken 7*'s true North American unveiling.

Many tournament participants would be playing the game for the first time at their qualifying events. They would have to rely on previous *Tekken* experience and learn as they played if they hoped to qualify.

To document the ambitious tournament, Bandai Namco turned to a young documentary filmmaker named Esteban Martinez. Martinez had started a YouTube channel called Hold Back to Block that focused on fighting-game communities. He covered events, held interviews. Then he decided he was ready for something bigger.

"My ultimate goal was to see if I could make a documentary on my own in a year's time," Martinez says of his first film. "But in terms of the movie's goal, I wanted to make a gateway for people to be able to sit down and watch this and understand that, yes, *Street Fighter* is this huge thing, but it belongs to this subset of games, and here are all the other mini communities that revolve around this thing."

That thing – and the movie – was *FGC: Fighting Game Community*. The documentary follows *BlazBlue* Evo qualifier Stephen Barthelemey, known as Lord Knight, as he attempts to win Evo 2015. Along the way, *FGC* takes viewers inside *BlazBlue* and broader fighting-game communities and explores what it's like to be a player and a tournament organizer.

"*Fighting Game Community* was a project I had wanted to do for a very long time," Martinez says. "There are a lot of docs that had come out about fighting games. And they're all good, for the most







part, but there wasn't that one documentary where I could go, 'Oh, I can show this to my grandma and she would understand it.' Most of them got bogged down in terminology and explaining what fighting games were—just too technical."

Martinez succeeded in his goal in making the film in a year. He also made the film completely on his own, handling all of the planning, filming, interviewing, and editing, as a one-man crew.

FGC caught the attention of Bandai Namco. Not only did the film intersect with the *Tekken* fanbase, but Martinez's approach was exactly what they needed.

"They brought me in and the said, "Hey, we have this game called *Tekken 7*, it's out in arcades in Japan right now, and we're thinking about doing a tour because we're getting ready to announce in the next year or so, but we know US players have been waiting for a long time, so we want to do this nationwide tour. But we also want to do video at each stop, like a small little documentary at each stop, and at the end of it we'll put it into one large movie," he says.

"And they needed someone who could do this on a small budget—well, not a small budget, but a tight budget with as little moving parts as possible, so I was kind of their guy.

"I was in their offices one week setting up the plans and everything, and the next week I was at Final Round shooting the first video," Martinez recalls.

At first, the documentary didn't have a story beyond the structure of the tour itself. But like all documentaries that find their way to completion, the story emerged along the way. The documentary wound up revolving around Hoa Luu, better known as Anakin, one of the top *Tekken* players in the United States.

"Anakin is a wrecking machine," Martinez says, laughing.

Anakin is a dominant Jack-7 player from Atlanta, the epicenter of the North American *Tekken* scene. He was already well established as a *Tekken* player, but he became the film's focus entirely by accident.

Anakin was one of the players Martinez had already become familiar with during his work on *FGC*. So at Combo Breaker, one of the biggest early qualifying tournaments on the tour, Anakin was one of his first interviews.

"And then he started to win everything," Martinez recalls.

Anakin won the Final Round qualifier, punching his ticket to the National Finals later that year. But Anakin wasn't satisfied. In order to be allowed to enter more tournaments along the tour, he relinquished his victory. If he didn't win another qualifier, he would be out of the National Finals. Still, Anakin was confident.

"I didn't even really look at it as losing my spot and having to win another tournament, because at that point I had so many years of tournament experience under my belt," Anakin says. "So any time I had to put my spot on the line, I was able to treat it like any other tournament. I think if I thought about the potential of losing I wouldn't have been able to perform at the level I would need. The risk I didn't really think about. Rather, I was just trying to get as good at this game we didn't yet have access to."

Anakin won another qualifier. And another. And another. Each time, he would relinquish his victory and enter another tournament on the tour.

While most players could only compete when the King of Iron Fist Tournament rolled through town—and most players who won those competitions were content to laugh their qualifying win all the way to San Francisco—


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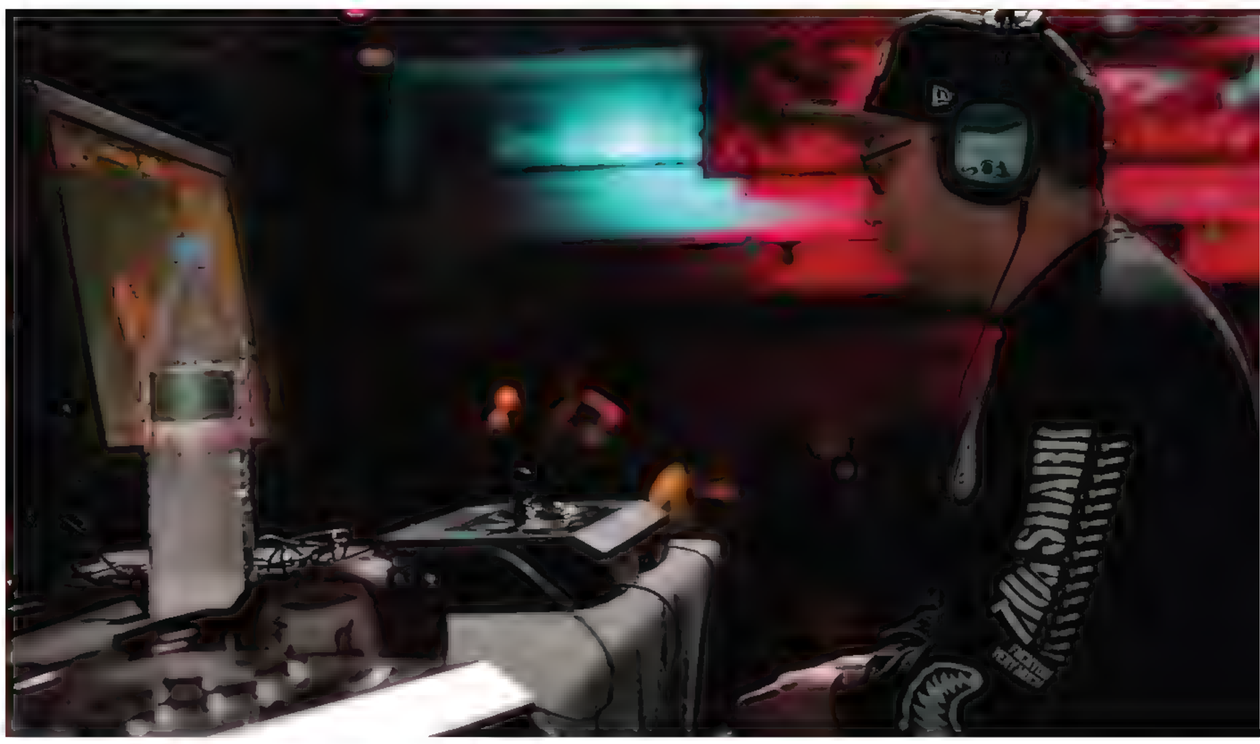

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Anakin's unorthodox approach, and sheer dominance, made him the perfect central figure for Martinez's documentary.

Still, Anakin needed a little luck along the way.

"[Anakin] had told me he was going to CEO (another of the biggest tournaments on the tour), he told me he was going to keep dropping, so I was like, okay, I'm going to do this thing where I *don't* interview Anakin – Anakin is going to be this background thing where these players are going to have to play him," Martinez explains. "So the players I picked were Speedkicks, who I hadn't really talked to yet; Mak (short for Maknificent), who had been to events and he had done well; and everyone told me to interview this player called KoDee. So I interviewed all three not knowing, especially the last two, what they would bring to the table.

"I was hoping that one of them would play Anakin. I was hoping that one of them would make it into Top 8, and play Anakin at some point. But what we didn't expect was the player Little Majin, a player from Tennessee who is *really* good at *Tekken*. Him and Anakin wound up playing in the first round, Top 8, and Majin upsets Anakin. So I was like, oh, this is going to be interesting."

Tekken tournaments typically go like this: Players are seeded based on their current ranks and experience levels, then put into pools. Players compete against the other players in their pools, round-robin style. Then, the top players in each pool are reseeded into a winners' bracket. Bracket play is double elimination: losing in the winners' bracket means a second shot in the losers' bracket; but lose there, and your tournament is over. The Grand Finals are between the player who emerged unscathed from the winners' bracket, and the player that fought their way through without a safety net in the losers' bracket.

Anakin losing to Lil Majin in the Top 8 bracket was a big upset, but it didn't mean Anakin's tournament was over. In the losers' bracket he would face three more players: Maknificent, KoDee, and Speedkicks.

"All three of the people I had interviewed had to play Anakin to get to Grand Finals. And I didn't plan that at all. That was like hitting the lottery," Martinez says. "I was like, 'I can't believe this is happening.'"

If that bit of cosmic kismet weren't enough, there was one more narrative surprise awaiting Martinez's camera lens: The player waiting for Anakin in the Grand Finals was the only player who had previously beaten him, Lil Majin.

In addition to his unorthodox approach to the King of Iron Fist Tournament, the documentary reveals something else about Anakin's play. It's not that he's untouchable. It's not that he never loses. But when Anakin loses, he knows exactly why he lost – and then comes back and uses that against his opponent. Your strength becomes your weakness. Your confidence from a previous victory against him becomes your undoing.

He does it over and over again throughout the movie.

Anakin ultimately takes second place in the North American Finals. His bend-but-don't break ways take him far, but not quite far enough to take down Jimmy J. Tran, or Naps, arguably the best *Tekken* player in the West. Still, the top three finishers all earned the right to travel to the World Finals in Japan, where the competition got much stiffer.

Japanese and Korean players especially are known the world over for their dominance in competitive gaming. *Tekken* is no exception.

Perhaps it was the wide-eyed excitement of competing in Japan against the best players in the world, or simply the increased level of competition, but both Naps and Anakin were quickly bounced from the World Finals.

"I put up a good showing for not having the game, but that's no excuse," Luu says. "Usually

you come out of it wanting to do better, no matter the experience. So that's the feeling I got. It's kind of bittersweet, but I still felt proud."

But the Americans still had one last representative. Many expected the Canadian Speedkicks, to join Naps and Anakin at the World Finals, but he was upset by an unsung upstart known as Princess Ling, or P. Ling for short. Not content to merely be the surprise underdog, Rontray "P. Ling" Sherman finished the World Finals as the highest ranking non-Korean, non-Japanese player.

"I got pretty nervous toward the end, because I just see all my teammates getting out, and suddenly I'm the only one left," Sherman recalls. "And then I was like, okay, no pressure, but..." He laughs. "It was a great experience," P. Ling says. "That was my first time going to a real arcade, because I had grown up playing on PS2, PS3. And I think it definitely made me level up how I play."

Ling's seventh-place finish was impressive, but also illustrative of the overwhelming Japanese and Korean dominance of the international *Tekken* field. But although they may seem hardwired for *Tekken* dominance, Korean and Japanese players aren't Jack-7s. They're real people, and a part of the same global *Tekken* community as their American counterparts.

"I wish we had more readily available translators," Martinez says of his experience making the film. "Because the Koreans and Japanese are looked at as the stronger players. They're always coming here, and they're not necessarily bullying us, but they're dominant. Especially Koreans. But the thing we don't often see is that everyone is friends."

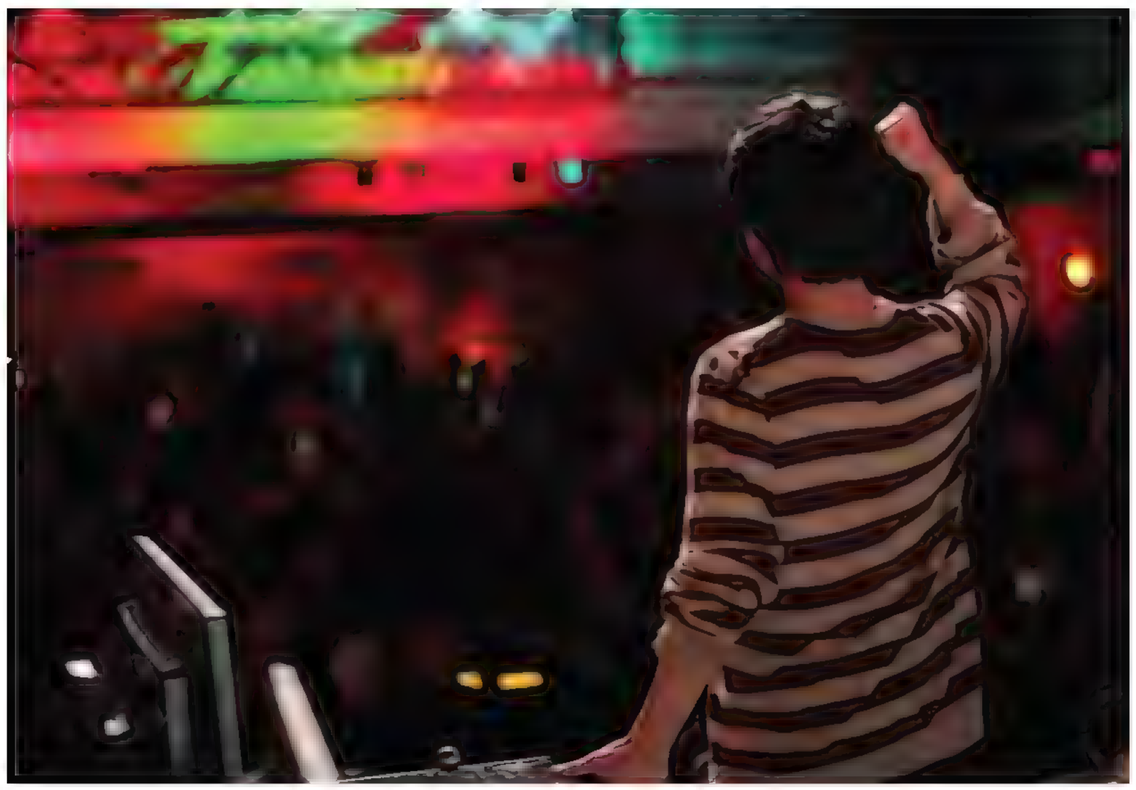
"All these players, they want to get better. They want to get stronger. They don't back away from a challenge. Sometimes you get upset and get salty, and make excuses. But these players come back. They want to prove themselves, against each other, to themselves. It's worldwide, too. Even when I was at Global Finals, everybody in that room, yeah, they were friends and they had known each other all these years through Tekken, but they're still trying to beat each other," he explains.

In all his travels, that ambition was the uniting factor of *Tekken* scenes from Sacramento to Seoul.

"It's a hungry community. And it's one that has a little bit of a chip on its shoulder, because *Street Fighter* has always been looked at as, like, *the* fighting game. But this game (*Tekken 7*) in particular, especially the way it's presented and the slow motion and the work that Bandai Namco is really doing with it, a lot of the Tekken players feel like this is their time," Martinez says. "And they are really going for it."





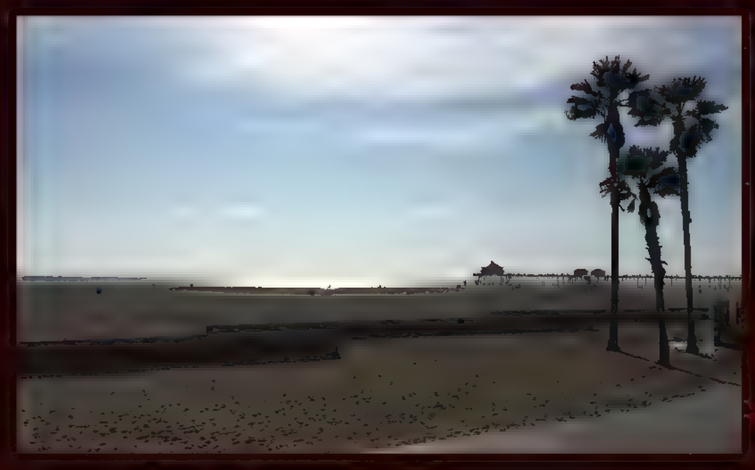




While planning, shooting, and editing the videos that would become *King of Iron Fist Tournament*, Esteban Martinez traveled to eight matches between March and November of 2016:







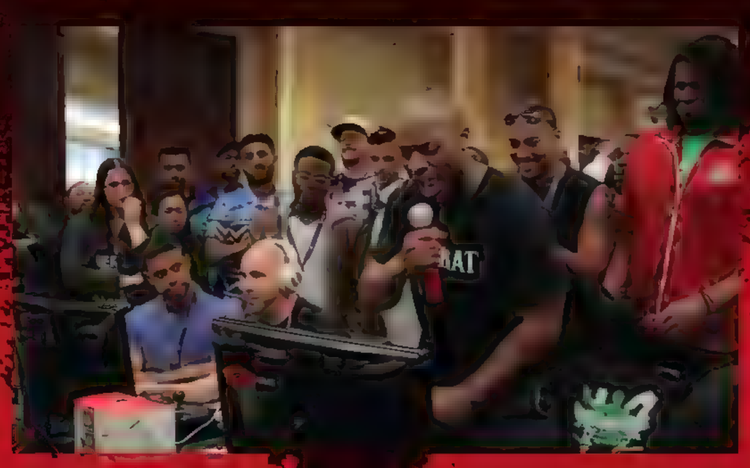




- Final Round (Atlanta)
- Northwest Majors (Seattle)
- Combo Breaker (Chicago)
- Canada Cup (Toronto)
- CEO (Orlando)
- Summer Jam (Philadelphia)
- North American Finals (San Francisco)
- Global Finals (Tokyo)

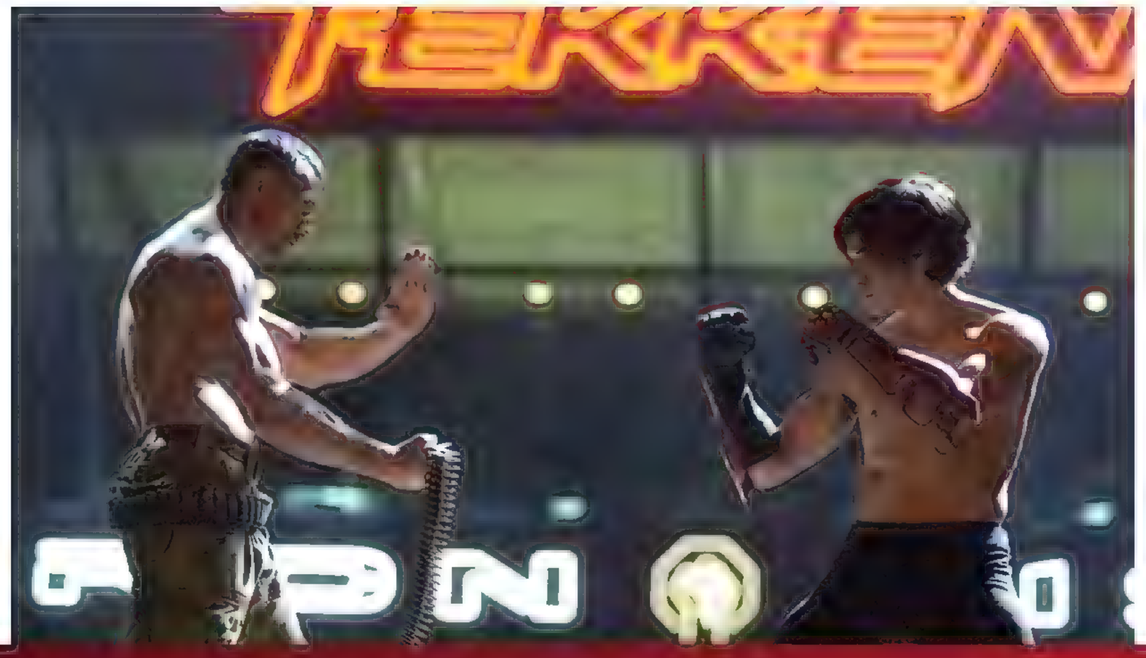
King of Iron Fist Tournament is available to stream exclusively on Amazon.













TEKKEN: THE MOVIES

THE STORYTELLING OF TEKKEN STRUGGLES IN ADAPTATION

FOR ALL ITS unique features, what sets *Tekken* furthest apart from other fighting games is its storytelling. As early as *Tekken 1*, the fully rendered endings for each fighter felt truly rewarding. The fighters felt like more than violent avatars: they were *characters*.

Compared to most other fighting games, then, *Tekken* should be ripe for adaptation. The general premise is simple. There's the driving tale of revenge, set against a tournament (perfect for dramatic structure) and clashing martial arts styles to keep things visually interesting. It's the stuff of classic kung-fu flicks, complete with heightened stakes, melodrama, and even occasional slapstick. Yet attempts to bring *Tekken* to the silver screen have been haunted by the fabled "video game movie" curse.

The first try was *Tekken: The Motion Picture*, an anime from Studio Deen. *Tekken: The Motion Picture* mostly follows the plot of the first game, with roles and fighting cameos for all the original characters. The film incorporates a few pieces of lore, but at a mere 54-minute runtime, details are packed in to the point of dramatic weightlessness.

It would be another decade before anyone attempted live action adaptation. *Tekken* was released in 2009, directed by Dwight H. Little. The movie stars Jon Foo as Jin Kazama, and the plot is more or less a loose mixture of Jin's backstory with Kazuya's. Jin's mother, Jun, is killed—but not offscreen by Ogre as in *Tekken 3*. Instead, Jin sees her murdered in front of him and vows revenge on his grandfather, who Jin believes is responsible. The movie befuddled action movie buffs and *Tekken* die-hards alike.

In a tweet, Harada expressed his disdain: "That Hollywood movie is terrible. We were not able to supervise that movie (It was a cruel contract) I'm not interested in that movie.".

The nicest thing Harada or any fan has had to say about the first live action film is that it's far better than the second, *Tekken 2: Kazuya's Revenge*, a sequel no one asked for and even fewer enjoyed.

Though each *Tekken* movie adaptation is bad in its own way, all three share a fatal flaw: none, not even the anime, come close to replicating the style and sizzle of the game's combat. If the fights were at least well-realized, bad acting and obtuse plotting would be forgiven. Yet the best any of them could manage were references to the games you'd rather be playing.

They've also tripped over *Tekken*'s expansive world. Let's face it: *Tekken* is a *lot*. A lot of characters, and a lot of details. Just beneath that deceptively simple premise, there are robots, genetically engineered boxing dinosaurs, , varyingly literal religious allegories, international geopolitical stakes, and hyperintelligent bears. Omit too many, and you risk disappointing fans and betraying the source material. Try to weave everything into an hour or two, and the result will be an unfocused mess. It's not difficult to imagine a *The Fast & The Furious* trajectory for a *Tekken* film franchise. The first film would the stage and introduces key players. As the series went on, and there was more space, additional characters and some of *Tekken*'s stranger details could be added to expand the story in scope. Sort of like... well, like the *Tekken* games.

In fact, if there's anything the various *Tekken* movies have demonstrated, it's that the best storytelling medium for *Tekken* is *Tekken* itself. Peruse any *Tekken* wiki, and you'll see character chronologies shaped like Christmas trees: a simple focal point up top, with each game beneath expanding a little further, all the way down to *Tekken 7*, where each character has a television episode's worth of tale to tell. The brief video endings of *Tekken 1* have evolved into something of an animated movie inside each new game.

Nowhere is this more apparent than *Tekken 7*'s final battle between Kazuya and Heihachi. In it, the cinematic conflict between father and son is integrated seamlessly into the gameplay. It's the most basic kernel of *Tekken*'s plot is recatalized and recontextualized into its deepest and most beautiful telling.

As it should be: that climactic battle is the culmination of over 20 years of storytelling and technological advancements.

"Between you and me," says Visual Production Manager Kousuke Waki, "after the release I drank sake at home and I played *Tekken 7*. And watching this scene, tears came down."








SURVIVAL IS NO GAME
TEKKEN
15
15
DVD
VIDEO
OPTIMUM HOME





Tekken 7 character designs

TEKKEN 7

TEKKEN CORKSCREW KICKS ITS WAY INTO THE MODERN WORLD

WHEN *TEKKEN* WAS conceived, there was no such thing as "eSports." *Tekken* was simply a competitive game by its nature, designed with one-on-one fights in mind – and, with any luck, local arcade meetups and informal tournaments would follow. It was a fighting game, not a "sport."

When *Tekken 7* entered development over 20 years later, the landscape of games had changed. Twitch and YouTube streamers were an industry unto themselves. Pro gamers, tournaments with stadium seating, and sponsored tournaments with six-figure purses had become the norm. The gaming world had evolved to meet what *Tekken* had been before there was a name for it. Now *Tekken* needed to evolve to meet what the gaming world had become.

"Tekken isn't just a legacy fighter like many," Harada says. "The direction, especially of [*Tekken 7*], is very modern. In fact, for this game, a lot of the design was focused around not just the excitement of the person playing the game, but also the excitement people watching, so that they can be linked to the players as they're playing the game. Which is really reflective of how people are enjoying games in the current environment."

"When I joined Tekken project for the first time, my senior told me that the most important point for Tekken is exhilaration. We've tried hard to improve this part," says Game Director Kohei Ikeda, who joined Tekken Project during the development of *Tekken Tag Tournament 2*.

When talking about *Tekken 7*, the team talks about the concept of "exhilaration" a lot. *A lot*. They say it so often it's surprising the word hasn't lost meaning for them. It's like a mantra; inexorably linked to the concept of *Tekken* itself.

As a longtime fan of 2-D fighting games and action games, Ikeda began working on implementing a slow-motion system – points in the battle where the game would slow down, zero in on the impending move, and create a sense of anticipation. To understand how well that mechanic works, all you need is to see it happen once in a crowded room, and hear the


TEKKEN 7
TM

cacophonous "Ohhhhhhh!" of the crowd to know it works. It's, in a word... exhilarating.

"Since timing is important for fighting games, in order to implement those additional features, I had carefully checked out users' reaction in Japanese arcade center during its location test and improved those features in ideal way," Ikeda says. "I created this feature with Harada-san and the programmer Kudo-san together, and I'm proud of this. Regardless of being the one who created this feature, when this effect happened in battles at Evo, I was excited with the audience to hear them making that noise."

Rage Arts are another example. These powerful moves can only be executed when your fighter is low on health – but if they land, they can easily turn the tide of the battle.

"They have a showy effect so that audience can easily understand those are awesome moves, and by limiting when they can be used, come-from-behind win situation happens more often, so that exciting moments are increased until the end," Ikeda says.

Rage Arts also slow down the game and draw the camera's focus, regardless of whether or not the move will hit. The "will it, won't it" wrinkle only adds to the anticipation.

Before joining the team during *Tekken 6*, Jun Yasuda was a famous pro player known as Mishimastar. According to Yasuda, features like Rage Arts "were intentionally developed for game audience. Even people who watch battles for the first time can enjoy watching battles and understand that something awesome has happened."

"That kind of excitement and level of intensity affects people watching the match as much as the players. And that's probably not something you can get as much in other fighters," Harada says.

The concept of eSports didn't rise in a vacuum, or even simply because the popularity of games increased. It rose because of the internet.













Making a competitive game like *Tekken* playable online is a no-brainer. But implementing online gameplay has always been a challenge.

Each move in *Tekken* takes up a certain number of frames of animation. The practical applications are obvious: Some moves take longer than others, which means different timing for blocks, sidesteps and counters. But dedicated *Tekken* players learn these frame counts to know exactly how long moves will take, and exactly what blocks, sidesteps and counters to use. Such counters are actually built into the game engine. Blocking a move, for example, will cause the blocked player to "drop frames," meaning that the number of frames remaining in the move after being blocked are dropped, leaving an opportunity for the blocking player to "punish" their opponent. Knowing whether an opponent has dropped 15 frames or 30 dictates what counter a player can get in before the opponent has recovered.

When a counter to a 15-frame drop (there are 60 frames per second) can be the difference between victory and defeat, even the slightest lag can affect an entire match.

Nonetheless, the Tekken team decided to implement online play in their *Tekken 7* cabinets in Japan and Korea. Their vision was a game that could be played competitively in two different arcades far apart. In a world with fewer arcades and fewer cabinets, the world would become the arcade. It would be a first for the series.

The first day of *Tekken 7*'s location test, there was a line of players outside the arcade, anxious to try the new game. Inside, however, the mood was dour. The cabinets' network functions weren't working. The team had been up for days trying to fix it.

"There are always difficulties come with online portions, since we aren't able to see issues until the game release in the market," says Yukio Koshiba, a designer who joined the team in 2002 during the development of *Tekken 4*. The anticipation of the game – and the online feature – was huge. The exhausted team wasn't able to achieve stable matchmaking until minutes before the doors opened.

The crisis was temporarily averted. When the game launched in Korea, however, the problems resurfaced.

"Our engineers had to carry the dev kits and fly to Korea for the investigation," Kudo recalls.

After many sleepless nights, they were able to solve the matchmaking issues. For most serious *Tekken* players, though, online play is a novelty – or a means to stream. Real competitions will always be played in person, with both competitors on the same console.

Stressful as they may have been, the network issues were ultimately a minor speed bump on the series' longest ever development cycle. *Tekken 7* continued the team's tradition of releasing in arcades as a sort of beta for



the console release. This time, though, there wouldn't be months in between arcade and console releases – there would be years.

Development of the arcade release began in 2013 after the release of *Tekken Revolution* for PS3, and continued after *Tekken 7* hit the arcades in 2015, at which point the team began developing both the expansion (*Fated Retribution*) and the console release simultaneously. It would be another two years – not until June of 2017 – before the content of *Tekken 7: Fated Retribution* made its way to consoles.

"The game changed quite a bit," Murray says.

Even as late as mid-2018, the team was still developing downloadable content (DLC) for the game, adding new characters and arenas.

"It's quicker than making a brand new game, and for people who already made an investment in the game itself – DLC is a better option for a lot of people than buying a brand new game. Plus with a fighting game, people have already learned all of the mechanics and all of the rules of Tekken 7, so adding characters and content just seems like the natural approach."

That puts the continuous development of *Tekken 7* at 5 years and counting. In that same length of time in the late '90s, the *Tekken* team churned out *Tekken*, *Tekken 2*, and *Tekken 3*, and were in mid-development on *Tekken Tag Tournament*. That difference has a lot to do with the changing game marketplace, like DLC. It also indicates the increased complexity of modern





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■丸ディティール(小) ■断面

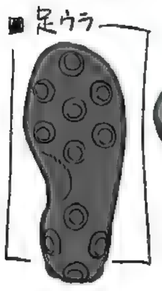
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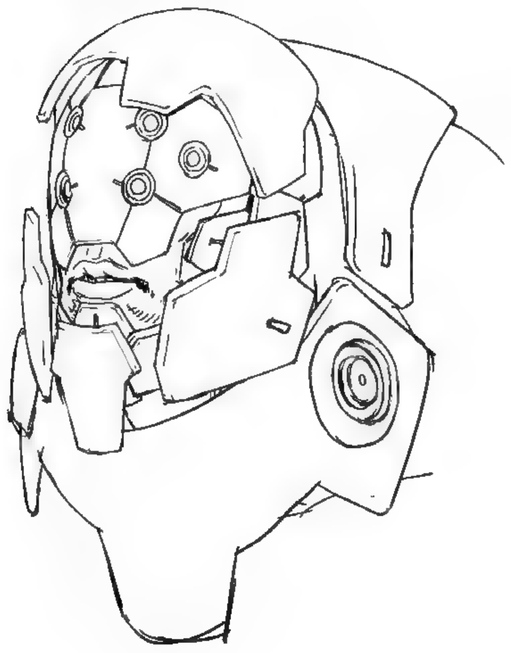
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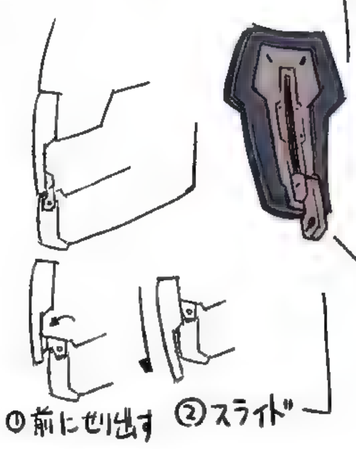
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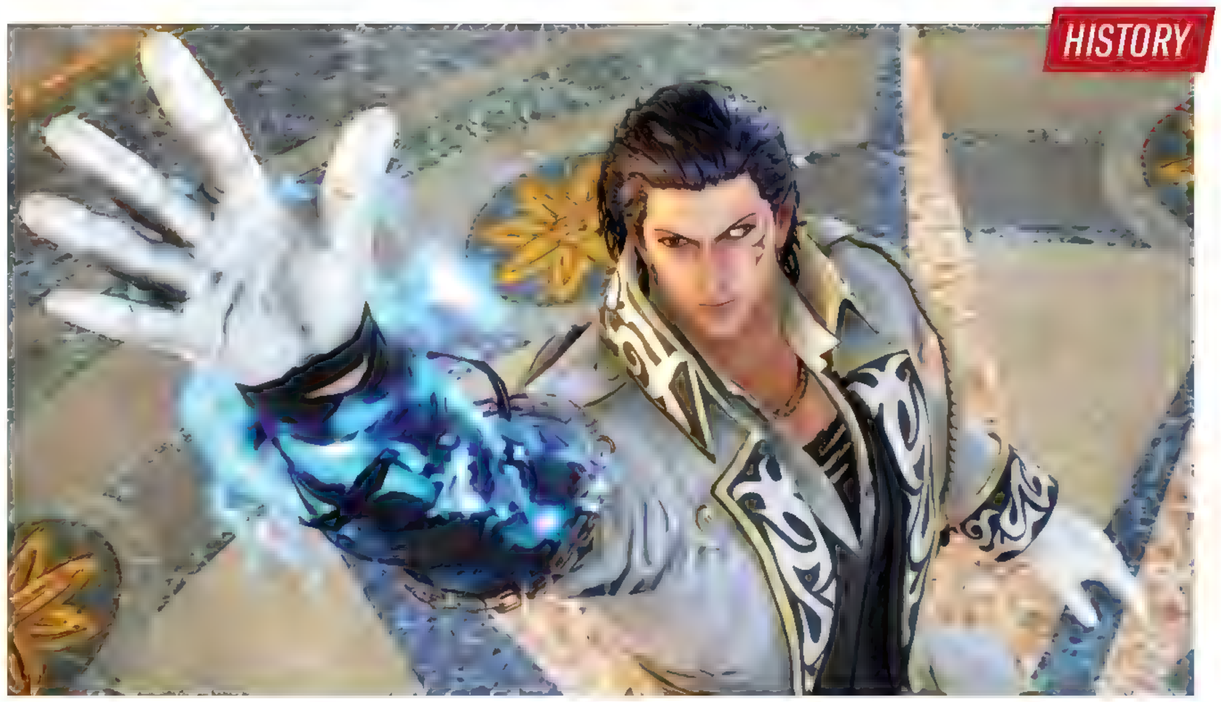


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graphics and the expanding scope of games. More time did not mean the development was any less fraught.

"There were a lot of problems in development of Story Mode. All members in charge of this part gathered a lot, discussed solutions, and confirmed processes again and again," Nakabayashi says. "Personally, what I remember most, was the last part of the development. In order to catch up the delay, I left most of the parts to Ikeda-san, and worked on scripting from morning till late night for 2 weeks."

"Because of its scenario delay, the development time for Story Mode was hugely reduced," Waki says. "Because of that, the quantity of the scenario was reduced, and some movie parts were cut." With pictures based on planned movie parts put in their place. "Additional stories planned during the development term were given up. This is the regret I have most. I hope that we would have depicted all of *Tekken* stories by high-quality 3-D CG movies."

And yet, these are the nitpicks of creators, unseen to most outside observers. Harada and his team remain their own harshest critics. The core gameplay has excited lifelong *Tekken* fans and brought new competitors into the fold. Ultimately, it is the preeminent realization of the series ongoing goal: To be true to what *Tekken* is while pushing it forward into the next generation.

There are big, sweeping innovations – like the final battle between Kazuya and Heihachi – and small ones, like the ability to choose your character's starting side.

"For common fighting games, characters would be at the right side or left side. Since some players are good at fighting at right side or left side, there are advantages or disadvantages in the game. Since I had been thinking to solve this issue for long time, I introduced a new system in which users can pick up their favorite side," Koshiba says.

There is plenty of which the team can be proud.

"We saw a lot of old school players coming back to the game that weren't necessarily happy with *Tag 2*. They like one-on-one, and they like the strategic choices in the battle and they just felt it was more streamlined. So it seems like people are happy mostly with *Tekken 7*," Murray says.

The proof, as it's always been with Harada, is in the numbers. *Tekken 7* has sold nearly 3 million copies worldwide, surpassing every game in the series since *Tekken 5* (and pushing all-time sales for the series ever closer to 50 million). It has ascended back to the top of competitive circles. Each year, the World Tour grows in competitors and scope.

As for their goal of making a game that is as exciting to watch as it is to play? All one has to do is attend a tournament and listen to the crowd.

"The schedule of development was very hard. Almost impossible," says team visual artist, Kenji Kimura. "After the development, I thought I should take a rest in Rivendell from *The Lord of the Rings*."

Perhaps the burden of the game wasn't quite as great as the One Ring. But even still, it felt pretty good to cast it into the bottom of an active volcano.

They had done it. And it was time to get ready for the next battle.

PROVING GROUNDS

SEOUL

QUDANS. SAINT. JDCR. KNEE. These players have dominated the top of the *Tekken* world rankings for years. And they all have one thing in common: They're Korean.

It's no secret that Korea is a powerhouse when it comes to competitive gaming. *Tekken* is no exception. The world rankings are crowded with Korean players, including a noticeable cluster at the top, with a few Japanese, and even fewer American players mixed in the highest ranks.

"You don't even really get a full picture of how dominant they are until you go there," says Anakin. "Because only their top guys really travel. So when you go to play in Seoul, you'll run into all sorts of really, really strong players you've never even heard of before."

Seoul, the capital of both the nation and the *Tekken* scene of South Korea, is a densely packed metropolis that rivals even Tokyo in its number of arcades and competitive gaming spaces. In Korea, being a professional gamer is seen as a viable career choice; and fans fill stadiums to watch their favorite players dominate *Starcraft 2*, *Fortnite*, and, of course, fighting games.

In central Seoul, there's one arcade in particular that is a bastion of *Tekken* talent. It doesn't look much like an arcade in the traditional sense. No black walls or neon lights or claw games. From the outside, you might confuse it for a convenience store unless you know what you're looking for. Inside, it looks more like someone's large, finished basement, with white walls and drop ceilings – only this particular basement contains at least 20 *Tekken* cabinets at any given time.

Welcome to Green Arcade.

All the top Korean players have honed their skill here. For most visitors, the long rows of *Tekken 7* cabinets and stools are a mere spectacle. Sitting down to play requires courage – and considerable skill. Even the most casual player at Green eats and breathes *Tekken* in a way few players from the West can even imagine.

So bring your camera. Take a seat. And prepare to say you've been beaten by one of the very best players in the world.



TOKYO

WHEN THE FIRST *Tekken* was released, it was an unlikely underdog. Namco was a big, successful company, fighting to take the lead in 3-D graphic technology, but it would take more than that to stand against the likes of *Street Fighter*. Harada realized that the key to the game's success would lie not within the walls of Namco HQ, but with the fans.

Fresh from the cabinet sales team, Harada joined Namco's arcade division and initiated an unprecedented, boots-on-the-ground approach.

"Obviously our company was trying to make a fighting game, but we weren't really the the big game that it is now. So he was on the location side of it," Michael Murray says. "So he was actually an arcade employee and he would run these tournaments."

Harada set up shop in an arcade in Shinjuku, Tokyo, called Play Max. "That was the mecca at the time," Murray says. There, Harada would play against newcomers and aspiring pros alike. He wasn't unbeatable, but he was strong enough to intrigue challengers. At tournaments, he would even dress up as Heihachi Mishima for extra impact.

"He had a costume. He even made this detailed wig – bald in the middle with spikes of hair on each side," Murray says.

Harada's eccentric presence and contagious enthusiasm earned him the nickname "Shinjuku Heihachi," a persona that has become the stuff of fighting game legend.

But other than drawing players to this new fighting game, there was a method to Harada's game-center madness. Spending days playing *Tekken* might have seemed like a lot of fun – and it was – but Harada was also collecting information. He wanted to look players in the eye as they played. He wanted to see the way they reacted. What did fans love about the game? What did they love about that particular fighter? This particular move? What made them frustrated?

Gathering on-location player feedback gave Namco the tools they needed to secure their place in a competitive market. And it earned Harada distinction within the company.

"This method was totally new in the '90s, and by doing this, I succeeded in convincing programmers, artists, sound designers, and planners," Harada says of his approach to the game. It was the first step in his path toward becoming the decades-long shepherd of *Tekken*.

Play Max has since closed. Even in Japan, arcades are fading away. The hallowed ground for *Tekken* players has moved to Sugamo, Tokyo, where you can find an arcade just beneath the train station filled with *Tekken* cabinets and players. There's even a *Tekken* Museum, with iconography and memorabilia from throughout the franchise.

"That one's one of [Namco's], so it's obviously easier to keep it running," Murray says.





THE FUTURE OF TEKKEN



IN SURVIVING A QUARTER of a century, *Tekken* has already surpassed expectations of the industry, its players, and even its former team members. Its staying power isn't evidence of stagnation, but proof of a franchise that has continued to evolve. But how long does *Tekken* have? If it's lasted this long, can it last another 25 years? 50?

"It's hard to say," Harada muses. "Obviously I probably won't be involved in the series at that age. It's even harder because, will people still be playing around a TV or a monitor or the same kind of platform they use today? It's hard to say. One thing I can say for sure is it will probably be influenced by AI. Maybe you would have an AI rival who seems just as human as a real opponent. And one of the reasons is that fighting games is most enjoyable to play against someone who is exactly the same skill level as you. So the AI can perfectly match your skill level. But on another front, 40 years from now we'll be very old people, so we might not have the same execution as we do today. But you may still have somewhat of a sharp mind, so they AI may be able to help you implement what you're trying to do and the strategy, without having to have the same execution. So you could have a really good battle between two old dudes because the AI could help translate what you're trying to do."

No matter the method of input, it's not difficult to imagine Harada continuing to play *Tekken* long into his twilight years (and continuing to have strong opinions about the direction of the franchise). Which is why even after he's gone, as long as his philosophy lives on—and the team continues to balance the essence of game to which he dedicated his life with the feedback of fans that have kept it alive—so, too, will *Tekken*.







FIGURES AND STATUES





IT'S BEEN SAID that a great character design is one still recognizable in silhouette. These days, that bar may have risen to how well a character design translates into a Funko Pop! Everyone from SpongeBob SquarePants to Bob ross have been a part of the cutesy, super-deformed vinyl toy line, and the combatants of the Iron Fist Tournament are no exception.

Toys of *Tekken* characters are nothing new. T-shirts, action figures, statues, joysticks, pens, pins—you name it, the *Tekken* characters have been emblazoned on them all. And if you turn one of those pins around? You'll probably still recognize the iconic hairline of one Heihachi Mishima.







Tekken 6
Marshall Law
Statue



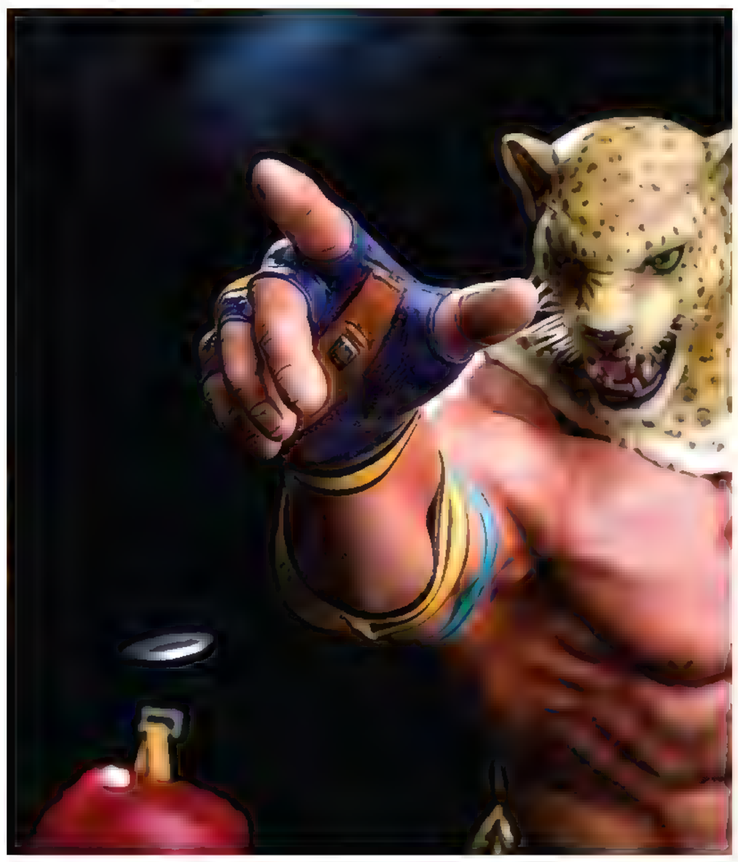




Tekken 3 Jin Kazama Statue

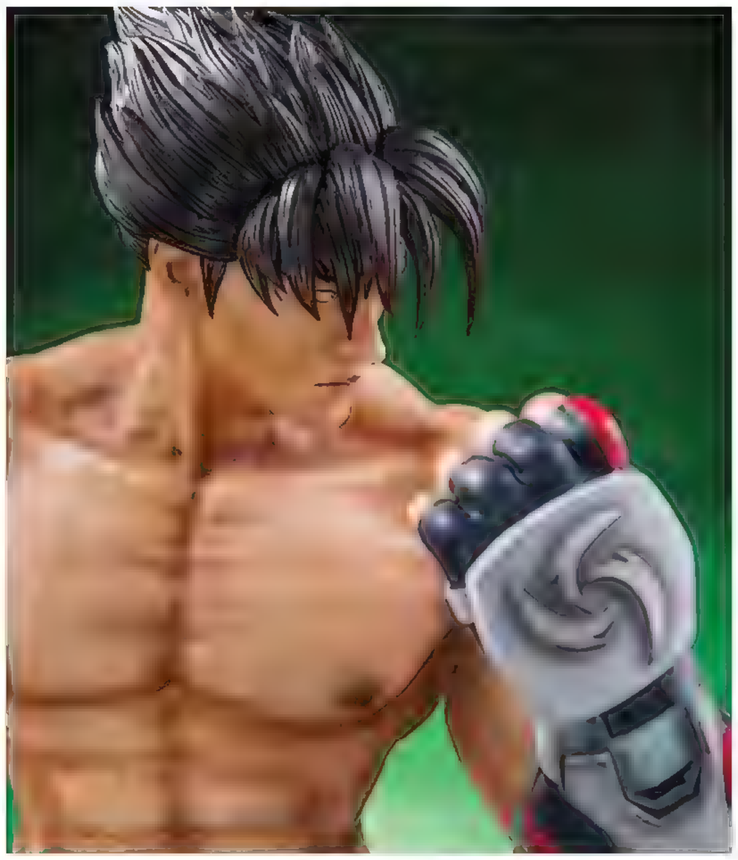






Tekken 5: Dark Ressurrection King Statue







Tekken 5 Jin Kazama Statue








POP!
GAMES
175
TEKKEN
KAZUYA
VINYL FIGURE / FIGURINE EN VINYLE /
FIGURA DE VINIL
AGE 3+
WARNING! CHOKING HAZARD
Small parts. Not for children under 3 yrs.



INTERVIEW WITH KATSUHIRO HARADA

You've made it well known that Heihachi Mishima is your favorite character. What is it about him you love? Why do you find him so compelling?
Heihachi Mishima somehow mirrors my thoughts. For example, his father became a monster, and his wife became a devil, and his son, too. And, his grandson became a devil as well. But, Heihachi is still a human. He is a human living a real world, although he lives in the world where science-fiction, fantasy, and occult are mixed.

I myself am interested in mysterious power, like occult stuff, and do some research on them, but I won't be affected by them. Again, Heihachi is only one depicted as a human in Mishima family. He has humane honest characteristics in that human's internal horrible lusts and ugliness are depicted. That's why I'm drawn to him.

Who is your least favorite character in *Tekken*? Why?
There is no character I hate. All of characters are my family members.

What do you remember most about development on *Tekken 1 & 2*? How were you able to stick it out and rise above others in such a fast-paced, relentless environment?
From fighting game perspective, we were way behind compared with other companies, and so we were in the position to following other fighting games in competition scene. But at that time, NAMCO was very much engaged in developing polygon games. Transferring from 2-D to 3D, NAMCO had a strong relationship with Kutaragi at Sony Computer Entertainment and apparently took a lead on the industry from technology perspective. Since our technology had drew so much attention, NAMCO became the company to take the lead in the polygon age. Although there were huge development costs, many arcade boards called System 11 and 12 had been sold and contributed to our sales. Since those system boards co-developed by NAMCO and SONY, with PlayStation chips, were much cheaper than original board NAMCO had developed, they sold really well.

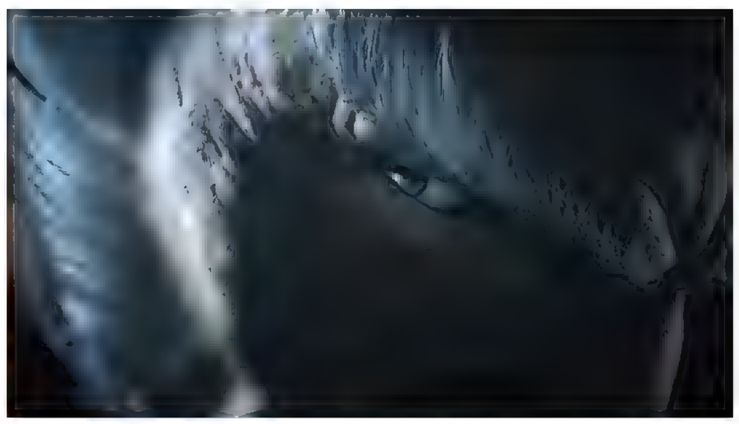












Scenes from the Tekken 7: Fated Retribution opening cinematic.

When you're starting a new *Tekken*, where do you start? New mechanics? Advance the story? Is it just about keeping *Tekken* current? Where do you begin when you're embarking on a new game?

Yeah, when the first game was being created, it was the systems and the kind of mechanics people would want to see. And then when the game sold a lot with *Tekken 3*, that's when the team finally sat down and said, "Hey, this is something that might continue for some time." So *Tekken 3* is when we actually sat down and fleshed out the story for the future.

But I guess it's always been about the game systems and the gameplay.

Did you get into any fights when you were a kid?

My current appearance doesn't really lead on to this, but I was actually very—I didn't really choose to fight. Although the environment I was in in the arcades, with adults, there were a lot of fights and the cops would have to break it up. Though I did do some martial arts, I didn't really fight. I would always try to avoid conflict when possible.

You'd rather beat them at a game?

It was quite interesting—you wouldn't really do this in the US, you wouldn't pick a fight with someone 10 pounds bigger than you. The same is true in the arcades. Even if you're really good at a game, if someone sat across from you and they looked like mafia or some kind of bad person, you wouldn't win. You would throw the game.

Especially in Shinjuku where I played, there were Yakuza for real, like you see in the Sega game. So if someone would sit across from you in an all white suit, you wouldn't want to embarrass them.

Forty years from today, *Tekken 20* is released. What is it like?

40 years? I'm, what, 95? 85? (he laughs)

It's hard to say. Obviously I probably won't be involved in the series at that age. It's even harder because, will people still be playing around a TV or a monitor or the same kind of platform they use today? It's hard to say. One thing I can say for sure is it will probably be influenced by AI.

So that maybe as people—people can have a romance with an AI, that's kind of the future you see in movies. Maybe you would have an AI rival who seems just as human as a real opponent. And one of the reasons is that fighting games is most enjoyable to play against someone who is exactly the same skill level as you. So the AI can perfectly match your skill level. But on another front, 40 years from now we'll be very old people, so we might not have the same execution as we do today. But you may still have somewhat of a sharp mind, so they AI may be able to help you implement what you're trying to do and the strategy, without having to have the same execution. So you could have a really good battle between to old dudes because the AI could help translate what you're trying to do.

Straight from your mind?

Yeah. That's probably how it's going to happen.

DEVELOPERS TALK TEKKEN



NAME: Kouhei Ikeda (aka Nakatsu) | TITLE: Game Director

Who is your favorite *Tekken* fighter?
Hwoarang. I was very much attracted by his military exercise in *Tekken 3* opening movie.

His motion was awesome and I couldn't help but stopping by and watching it.

How did you come to work on *Tekken*?
I think my chronology to start working on *Tekken* project is unique. Before working on *Tekken* Project, I was working as a movie director at other company called Kadokawa (aka Enterbrain) which release the game magazine *Famitsu*. The reason why I joined this company was because I was a good *Tekken* player, and an editorial department asked me to record my combo play and create the movie. So, I was hired by the editorial department then.

After entered this company, I was involved in *Famitsu WaveDVD* which is magazine with DVD, and I was interviewing Harada-san and planned the contents explaining how attractive *Tekken* was by myself. (Nakatsu's 100 executions)

I had worked on planning game movie contents, and launching/managing Tougeki (e-sports), fighting game tournament, and strategy DVD guide for 7 years and had a lot of chancers to communicate with dev teams and producers. By communicating with them, I was getting more interested in "Creating Game" and "Entertaining people for worldwide by the game I've been involved in" rather than creating movie contents of games.

Then I applied to my favorite *Tekken* project. I had interviews with the producer Harada-san and director Yonemori-san then. When I passed the interviews and was hired, I was really glad and shouted "I did it" from my heart. But, I was guided to *Soulcalibur IV* project at my first day, and left the position of a Battle Effects Director.

Although I thought that this was different from what I expected, I tried hard to upload the master. After this project, Harada-san called me and said "Nakatsu, there is a task I'd like you to work with", and I thought that I would be finally involved in *Tekken* development, But, it was technology research of action games...

In the end, it took 4 years for me to join *Tekken* project after I joined NAMCO.



"[Hwoarang's] motion was awesome and I couldn't help but stopping by and watching it."
– KOUHEI IKEDA



NAME: Yasuki Nakabayashi | TITLE: Lead Planner

Who is your favorite *Tekken* fighter?
Paul. I feel exhilarated when hit enemies by his special move "Shattering Fist!"

Tekken has an impressive roster of fighters – how much do you worry about "balance"? How are you able to keep all the fighters equally powerful?
I'm trying not to create characters with extremely low functioned moves, and like to avoid characters who will be difficult for players to use. To do that, we first implement minimum required functions into characters, then add personality to each character.

NAME: Yukio Koshiba | TITLE: Game Designer



Who is your favorite *Tekken* fighter?
Lee Chaolan. I've been using Lee Chaolan since first *Tekken* console version. I love not only his elegance in his appearance and action, but also his comedic features.

Could you share a story of something you contributed to *Tekken* that you're particularly proud of?
For common fighting games, characters would be at the right side or left side. Since some players are good at fighting at right side or left side, there are advantages or disadvantages in the game. Since I had been thinking to solve this issue for long time, I introduced a new system in which users can pick up their favorite side at the time of *Tekken 7* arcade release.

***Tekken* is famous for its very intuitive controls. Does this make designing new iterations easier, or more challenging?**
We will keep the button positioning that is corresponding to four limbs. But, as experienced in *Tekken Tag Tournament*, adding another button might be discussed in the future as necessary. For the example of *Tekken 7*, in its story mode, the game provides story assist button for beginners to launch special moves easily.

NAME: Jun Yasuda (aka Mishimastar) | TITLE: Battle Tuning Director



Who is your favorite *Tekken* fighter?
Kazuya, he is the coolest.

What makes your favorite *Tekken* fighter unique?
Although this move is common among Mishima-characters, "Electric Wind God Fist" (EWGF) is the best. Among all fighting games, this special move is the most exhilarating. In practice mode, just launching "Electric Wind God Fist" is fun for me. Just launching that move million of times is just so fun. It only happens to *Tekken*.

Is there are particular story from working on *Tekken* you've always wanted to tell the world? Give us the juicy details!
Tekken has a way of evoking a player's "anger" feelings. Even its developers get angry after the game play. Sometimes, because of this anger, there would be no ends in fighting each other in games, and we lost transportation to go back home.



NAME: Kei Kudo | TITLE: Lead Programmer



Who is your favorite *Tekken* fighter?
Hard to pick up just one character, but Heihachi Mishima. He is strong and the central position of *Tekken*.

Could you share a story of a particular challenge you faced working on *Tekken*? How did you overcome it?
Tekken 7 arcade version has been the first to support online battles among arcade centers. And there were several network troubles. Even a few days before location tests ahead of the release, networks didn't work properly, and every night, development staffs had to visit arcade centers after those closures and look for the solution. After the release, when we had troubles in Korea, our engineers had to carry the dev kits and flied to Korea for the investigation.



NAME: Tomoko Odashima | TITLE: 3-D Art Director/Lead Character Director/Lead Character Item Director

Who is your favorite *Tekken* fighter?
King. He was the first character I was involved in when I joined *Tekken* Project.

Could you share a story of a particular challenge you faced working on *Tekken*? How did you overcome it?
When implementing Collaboration Character "Geese" (Howard from SNK). I've gathered a lot of documents in order to express "Geese" likeness and "*Tekken*" likeness. Listening to opinions from other staff, I firstly created his face design, then worked on his modeling. By doing that, I'm confident that I've created "Geese" who people expected.

What, to you, are *Tekken's* defining visual characteristics?
I think points would be, their visual characteristics and costumes are not too realistic, and not too fantasy, they have their own originality. At a first glance, those look like serious, but they have fun aspects in that characters can abandon themselves to pleasure by item customization.

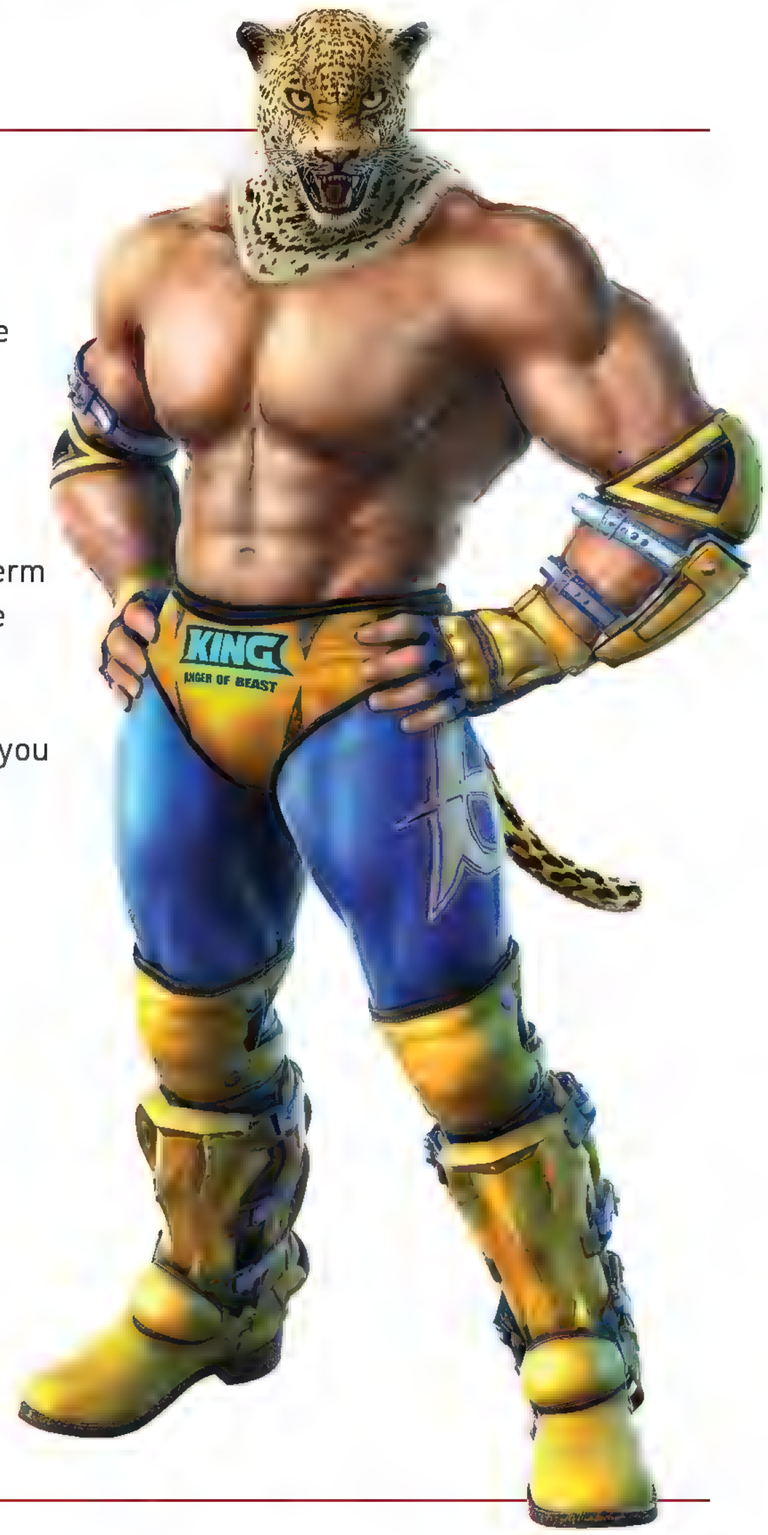


NAME: Kousuke Waki | TITLE: Visual Production Manager

Who is your favorite *Tekken* fighter?
Paul and Law. For Paul, I like his manliness. It probably comes from his style of wearing his leather jacket. And, his vertical long hair style shows his strong preference and style. Regarding Law, I think his movement and fighting style are the best.

Could you share a story of a particular challenge you faced working on *Tekken*? How did you overcome it?
We have a lot of difficulties in developments of *Tekken*. Development term is short and there are many assets have to be created. We feel pressure by those tasks and dignity which *Tekken* has. In order to overcome this pressure, the important thing is to have your own pride in the development—in yourself. The way to achieve this is relying on people you can believe in, try to see things objectively, and move forward.

What, to you, are *Tekken's* defining visual characteristics?
Black and Red. Iron is characteristic in that it becomes red when burned. This image matches *Tekken*.



> **"In order to overcome [the] pressure, the important thing is to have your own pride in the development — in yourself."**
> — *KOUSUKE WAKI*



NAME: Kenji Kimura | TITLE: Visual Artist

Who is your favorite *Tekken* fighter?
Paul, Lee, Xiaoyu, Jinpachi. I am attached to the characters I was involved with in my 20s.

What, to you, are *Tekken's* defining visual characteristics?
Characters with strong habits, realistic facial design which is not too real, unique worldview like comics (manga) that allow everything, and realistic touch/operation, passion, dynamism, exhilaration.

What is your approach to achieving that *Tekken* style?
Since I've grown up with Japanese comics and anime culture, my approach to *Tekken* has been thinking about how to realize depicting cool, beautiful arts and situation, characters with their muscles and styles by the latest gaming hardware, that I felt when I was young.



NAME: Takao Yamagishi | TITLE: Animation Director



Who is your favorite *Tekken* fighter?
Paul, because I mainly use him.

Could you share a story of a particular challenge you faced working on *Tekken*? How did you overcome it?
When I worked on *Tekken 7*'s arcade version, the number of new characters was increased from *3* to *7*, despite of increased workload, the schedule was shortened. Faced with this crisis, and I was really fed up with the project. But I couldn't leave the project, and all animators tried hard to achieve the goal. That was really predicament, and I will leave *Tekken* when the same thing happens in the future.

NAME: Junichi Funada | TITLE: Sound Designer



Who is your favorite *Tekken* fighter?
Gigas. To tell you the truth, Gigas's voices are...oops.

There are a lot of crazy, fantastical elements to *Tekken*, but ultimately it's a game about people hitting each other. How important is realism to *Tekken's* sound design?
I think, regarding sounds around characters such as environment, footstep sounds, etc., in order to make characters outstanding, creating realistic sounds would be important.

On the other hand, symbolic key sounds such as hitting sounds should be exaggerated. The reason being, exhilaration, tension, timing of battle tactics would be well expressed by them. To design *Tekken's* sounds, both "Realism" and "Deformation" are important approaches and factors.

NAME: Kanako Kakino | TITLE: Sound Director/Sound Supervisor



Who is your favorite *Tekken* fighter?
Panda and Kuma.

Could you share a story of something you contributed to *Tekken* that you're particularly proud of?
When I joined this project as a sound director, the balances between background music (BGM) and sound effects were not good. They didn't match with each other. Although the BGM was unique, stylish and with high-quality, there were no resources to work on other stuff. I contributed to balancing this part and solving the issue. To keep BGM stylish, I visited John Roesch's studio to record sound effect by foley methods.

I feel the potential for sounds of *Tekken*. It still has some room to be improved in the future.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A FINISHED BOOK IS like a fighting game, made possible and whole by its robust and diverse cast of fighters. I would like to acknowledge the following people, who contributed their time, passion, and energy, while I otherwise writhed about on the floor in desperation like Doctor Bosconovitch.

Jay Edidin, a fearsome defender and ass-saver, who was calm and wise in difficult times and made me read like a much better writer than I am.

Rich Young, for championing beautiful and complex books for beautiful and complex games, and whose name should be a *Tekken* character some day.

Rodolfo Muraguchi, fastest fighter in the game, whose relaxed disposition and lickity-split layouts made our sprint-like schedule possible.

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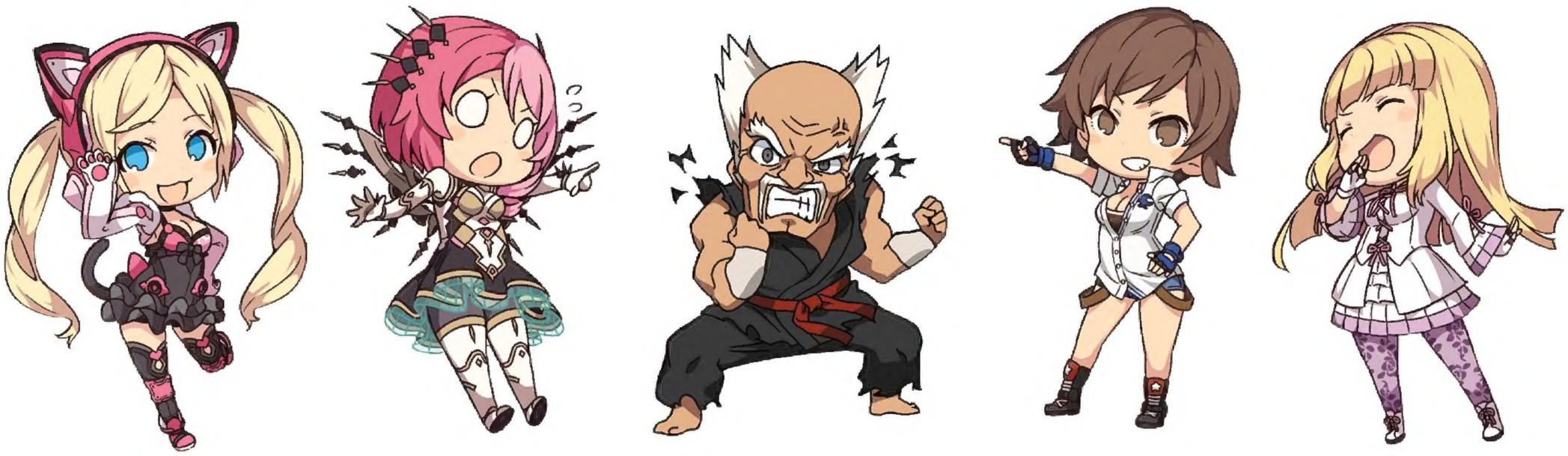
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GAME OVER